



Proposed mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags

SUBMISSION FORM

The Government is seeking feedback on a proposed mandatory phase out of the sale or distribution of single-use plastic shopping bags.

For more information about the Government's proposals read our [Proposed mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags consultation document](#).

Submissions close at 5.00 pm on Friday 14 September 2018.

Making a submission

You can make a submission in three ways:

1. Use our online submission form available at www.mfe.govt.nz/consultation/plasticshoppingbags. This is our preferred way to receive submissions.
2. Complete this submission form and send to us by email or post.
3. Write your own submission and send to us by email or post.

Publishing and releasing submissions

All or part of any written submission (including names of submitters) may be published on the Ministry for the Environment's website www.mfe.govt.nz. Unless you clearly specify otherwise in your submission, we will consider that you have consented to website posting of both your submission and your name.

Contents of submissions may be released to the public under the Official Information Act 1982 following requests to the Ministry for the Environment (including via email). Please advise if you have any objection to the release of any information contained in a submission and, in particular, which part(s) you consider should be withheld, together with the reason(s) for withholding the information. We will take into account all such objections when responding to requests for copies of, and information on, submissions to this consultation under the Official Information Act.

The Privacy Act 1993 applies certain principles about the collection, use and disclosure of information about individuals by various agencies, including the Ministry for the Environment. It governs access by individuals to information about themselves held by agencies. Any personal information you supply to the Ministry in the course of making a submission will be used by the Ministry only in relation to the matters covered by this consultation. Please clearly indicate in your submission if you do not wish your name to be included in any summary of submissions that the Ministry may publish.

Submission form

The questions below are a guide only and all comments are welcome. You do not have to answer all the questions. To ensure others clearly understand your point of view, you should explain the reasons for your views and provide supporting evidence where appropriate.

Contact information

Name*	Jason Woodroofe, Miranda Donovan, Cameron Stirling, Caitlin Hook
Organisation (if applicable)	Massey University Student Project group
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Phone	
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Submitter type*	Individual	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	NGO	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Business / Industry	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Local government	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Central government	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Iwi	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Other (please specify)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Massey University student project group focusing on plastic waste management

* Questions marked with an asterisk are mandatory.

Questions

1. Do you agree with the proposed mandatory phase out of the sale or distribution of single-use plastic shopping bags in New Zealand, including those made of degradable (eg, oxo-degradable, biodegradable and compostable) plastic?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Why / Why not?

Yes, for New Zealand to transition to a sustainable circular economy, our excessive use of plastic must be curbed. Each year around 2.5 million tonnes of plastic waste ends up in New Zealand landfills, showing the scale of the problem.

However, the banning of plastic bags that are oxo-degradable, bio-degradable and compostable may be a step too far which could actually inhibit positive consumer behaviour. Although we realise that these plastic bags often do not end up in the right environments that allow them to degrade appropriately.

Any plastic bag ban that is implemented must be done so in a way that makes it as easy as possible for the consumer to continue their daily routines uninterrupted, while making an environmentally friendly choice. The MFE's own consultation document highlights that the Colmar Brunton Better Futures 2017 report found that the build-up of plastic in the environment was among the top 10 concerns of New Zealanders.

2. We have proposed a mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags. This could include under 50 microns or under 70 microns in thickness.

If you agree with a mandatory phase out, which option do you prefer, and why?

- less than 50 microns in thickness
- less than 70 microns in thickness
- Other (please specify)

Any ban "plastic bag" ban implemented should be just that. By differentiating between types/thicknesses of plastic this issue is being turned into a political one rather than an environmental one. While there remains an industry around plastic bag production in New Zealand, society will struggle to move towards a circular and sustainable economy. It is the job of government and government agencies to implement "top down" approaches to social change.

If the issue becomes demerited to arguing over certain thicknesses, arguably we are not dealing with the issue at all. If New Zealand is passionate about curbing plastic waste, this may be one of only a few tangible opportunities in the next few decades where we get to act.

Although bags that are over 70 microns are usually boutique-style shopping bags which are used in far less numbers than the thinner single use plastic bags commonly found at checkouts and retail stores, this does not mean they are an acceptable alternative to thinner plastic bags.

3. Are you aware of types of single-use plastic shopping bags that should be exempt from a mandatory phase out?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

If yes, what are they and why should they be exempt?

Yes, New Zealand companies are currently pursuing a voluntary phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags are considering middle-weight multi-use plastic bags as alternatives for customers to purchase. Our understanding is that these are between 50 and 70 microns. Although better than thinner alternatives, these bags should not be exempt. Although in theory the plastic may be used again, in practise consumer habits will dictate that those "thicker" plastic bags will likely get used only once or a hand full of times. Just as the way that single use bags are

used. This once again means that New Zealand is not actually dealing with the issue of plastic waste, it is turning the issue into a political play.

4. Do you currently manufacture, sell, provide or import for sale or personal use these types of single-use plastic shopping bags:
- a. 50 microns or less in thickness
 - b. more than 50 microns and less than 70 microns in thickness?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

If yes, please specify which bags and explain how a phase out would be likely to impact on you.

[Click here to enter text.](#)

5. Should smaller retailers be exempted from a mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Why / Why not?

Despite the extra cost on small retailers it is small community actors that play a large part in enacting social change, by developing and enforcing community norms. By exempting small retailers, the issue of plastic waste is not being dealt with and is being turned into a political football of such.

6. If smaller retailers are exempted from a mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags and they are defined by their number of full-time equivalent employees, what should that number be?

They should not be exempt, but if they are then it should be approximately 5 full time employees.

7. The proposed mandatory phase-out period for single-use plastic shopping bags is at least six months from when regulations are Gazetted, subject to consultation. Do you agree with this timing?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Why / Why not?

This timeframe allows both retailers and consumers to adjust and change their habits around plastic bags. Time will be needed to source new products and suppliers. Businesses and consumers should not have to suffer because of this ban, so appropriate measures should be taken to ensure they are supported throughout the transition.

If no, what do you think would be a more appropriate phase-out period?

- two months
- nine months
- one year
- other (please specify)

[Click here to enter text.](#)

8. Do you agree that the benefits expected from implementing a mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags exceed the costs expected from implementing the phase out?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Why / Why not?

Please consider both monetary and non-monetary costs and benefits (those that can be measured by money as well as those that can't).

Throughout history it can be seen time and time again that the costs of inaction always outweigh the costs of taking action on issues as important as environmental sustainability. While there may be initial costs to the producers and consumers, overall, we believe the costs to be worthwhile. Clean up projects, waste management and environmental degradation are all huge costs to the taxpayer that are likely to get more expensive with time unless pre-emptive action is taken.

New Zealand also heavily relies on our tourism industry. Our tourism industry thrives on the idea and image of New Zealand as a clean and green country, with millions of tourists visiting every year to see our environment. Plastic pollution directly damages our natural environment that is behind New Zealand's image as clean and green, thus threatening the stability of long-term income from our tourism industry.

9. Do you think that reasonably practicable alternatives to single-use plastic shopping bags exist in New Zealand?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

If no, what do you think is missing currently that would need to be available?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

10. How can people be encouraged to reuse multiple-use shopping bags enough times to offset the environmental impacts of producing them? (select one or more)

- voluntary incentive schemes by individual retailers
- national information campaign and mobile phone app for shoppers
- other (please specify)

11. What would help you and your family adjust to life without single-use plastic shopping bags?

If alternative options were widely available, cheap and practical. There is not much adjustment necessary if stores provide alternatives etc.

12. How can data on single-use plastic shopping bags and other single-use plastics entering the market and monitoring of reductions be improved?

We are not sure on this point.

13. Please provide any additional comments or suggestions about the proposed mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags.

We are fully supportive of the proposed ban but would like to emphasise the importance of taking action by banning all plastic bags, regardless of their microns in thickness. For social change to effectively happen, it is the responsibility of governments to facilitate that change between the public, private and individual actors. We hope that the MFE and wider government take the appropriate action necessary for this social change to happen.

Thank you for taking the time to read our submission.

Releasing submissions

Your submission may be released under the Official Information Act 1982 and may be published on the Ministry's website. Unless you clearly specify otherwise in your submission, we will consider that you have consented to website posting of both your submission and your name.

Please check this box if you would like your name, address, and any personal details withheld.

Note that the name, email, and submitter type fields are mandatory for you to make your submission.

When your submission is complete

If you are emailing your submission, send it to plasticshoppingbags.submissions@mfe.govt.nz as a:

- PDF
- Microsoft Word document.

If you are posting your submission, send it to Proposed Mandatory Phase Out of Single-use Plastic Shopping Bags, Ministry for the Environment, PO Box 10362, Wellington 6143.

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