

Your submission to Proposed mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags

Gabrielle Message, **Gabrielle Message**

Reference no: 6073

Submitter Type: Individual

Clause

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? Why / why not?

Position

Yes

Notes

I absolutely agree with a mandatory phase-out. It should be the first action in a comprehensive plastic action plan by the government. This plastic item has been proven to be too risky in the hands of the public. Our consumption of plastic bags is ridiculously high for the amount of time they are used. The benefit they provide is not worth the risk posed to the environment. It's time we move to a circular economy where every material we use is seen as either a technical or biological nutrient - i.e. it will be recycled continuously (not downcycled) or it will be degraded into the earth with no negative consequences on biology. The compostable option should not be chosen lightly - it should be chosen when there is no other option and chosen in accordance to the rate of the items consumption, to make things manageable for ourselves, to lessen our load on the land and to minimise risk. I therefore agree with the ban on compostable plastic bags. I have read research about 'degradable' plastics polluting the soil with microplastics or binding additives through the application of commercial compost. For this reason, I believe single-use products should be replaced by reusable alternatives. What we need now is to develop an environment that supports reusables - in tangible terms, this means sanitising facilities and potentially the standardisation of items (thinking of takeaway containers) and in non-tangible terms, a culture of reusables encouragement.

Clause

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?

Position

Other (please specify)

Notes

The ban should include the new thicker plastic bags that supermarkets have begun handing out - see Countdown. These are just as harmful, if not more harmful as they will take up more space in landfills and potentially contribute to more leachate production. If supermarkets offer a reusable bag it should not have plastic content. It's time to be tough or the core problem will not be solved.

Clause

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

Position

No

Notes

Clause

4. Do you currently manufacture, sell, provide or import for sale or personal use these types of single-use plastic shopping bags:

Position

No

Notes

Clause

5. Should smaller retailers be exempted from a mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags? Why / why not?

Position

No

Notes

There should be no exemptions because the risk these bags pose is too high and doing so would dilute the potential of a culture shift. We have to send a clear message that this kind of single-use plastic consumption is not ok and that this is the beginning of a circular economy journey that we are taking on behalf of our children, as well as the sea creatures in the most imminent danger. Nano-sized particles are entering the food chain, the air, the soil and the water we drink. We don't yet know the extent of their effect on human health, however, it seems that taking the precautionary principle is wholly sensible right now. From The Guardian: "Some

microparticles may pass through the body without causing harm, others may lodge there dangerously. Many are suspected to be carcinogenic or to have hormone-disrupting properties."

Clause

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?

Notes

There should be no exemptions.

Clause

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?

Position

Not sure

Notes

I don't know the due process for policy implementation. I know that people need some time to practise new behaviours, source new suppliers etc. I hope for the final effect to be felt within a year.

Clause

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? 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).

Position

Yes

Notes

First and foremost, the potential cost of nano-particle plastic pollution on human and animal health could be massive. It's a kind of pollution that is extremely difficult (potentially impossible) to 'take back.' If microplastics are found in our seafood, that hurts a big industry for us too. Some tourists are also beginning to notice the dirtiness created by plastic waste. This phase-out will lead to creative solutions - we humans can adapt! Our environment is not poised to adapt to plastic.

Clause

9. Do you think that reasonably practicable alternatives to single-use plastic shopping bags exist in New Zealand? Why / why not?

Position

Yes

Notes

Our household keeps baskets in our boot that work great. Reusable bags are great - more specifically those without plastic content that will shed when washed.

Clause

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)

Position

Other (please specify)

Notes

I like the idea of campaigns that are personalised to each city rather than a single government-driven campaign, which could create resistance or resentment in some people. My idea is for mfe to collab with Outlook for Someday on a campaign that invites schools to participate in a competition to make the best video announcing a new age of reusable bag use in their town, and encouraging their neighbours to get in behind. This makes use of the natural enthusiasm that young people have for this issue. I think this would get more peoples attention and make the encouragement more meaningful, coming from the voices of tomorrow. The videos could be run on TV and social media. They should all make use of the same hashtag or emblem - something that ties them together.

Clause

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

Notes

Opportunities to practice making paper bin liners perhaps?

Clause

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

Notes

There should be an easy way for consumers to notify the authorities if an outlet is giving out plastic bags.

Clause

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

Notes

I encourage the government to make this move the first of many towards a circular economy that will stimulate creativity and innovation. NZ has the chance to lead by example.