



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*	
Organisation (if applicable)	Click here to enter text.
Address	
Phone	
Email*	

Submitter type*	Individual	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.

* 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?

I am in full support of the proposed mandatory phase out of single use plastic bags here in New Zealand. I believe that the phasing out of single use plastic bags is an important step in highlighting the negative effects of plastics (and their degradable/compostable alternatives) and educating the public on how our consumer habits impact the environment. The phasing out of

single use plastic bags will actively engage individuals in sustainable management of resources and get people thinking about their personal contribution to humanities negative effects on the environment. Although the phase out of single use plastic bags is a small part in reducing our overall plastic waste it is nonetheless an important step in creating public awareness and participation in environmental management. New Zealand prides and markets itself on a clean and green environment and it is time we started living up to the hype. The removal of single use plastic bags as a potential litter source is an obvious choice for the betterment of our environment and economy.

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)

Limiting plastic bags thicknesses to 70 microns will make it economically less viable for retailers to supply plastic bags out of convenience for their customers. Bags that are 70 microns and higher in weight are less mobile than 50 micron and above bags and therefore less likely to find their way into water collection systems and ultimately the ocean. Also, 70 micron bags and above are more robust and more likely to be used multiple times which will better offset the energy and emissions it took to create them.

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?

I am aware of proposed exemptions for plastic bags of any thickness that do not have handles. Examples are supermarket bags dispensed on a roll with the intention of containing fruit and vegetables, rubbish bags and zip-lock bags to name a few. I believe that alternatives for these bags should be introduced over time as well. In many cases, paper bags are an adequate alternative and their use in place of plastic bags should be encouraged as part of the educational aspect of the phase out.

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?

Once the public become accustomed to shopping with their own multiuse bags they will naturally bring them when shopping. Exempting small retailers will work to retain some of our bad habits towards our use and reliance on single use plastic bags. The temptation to shop at a store out of convenience because they have single use plastic bags should be removed. Small retailers will quickly adjust to offering alternatives (such as paper bags) either for free, for a small charge at the point of sale or built in to the cost of the items purchased.

Rather than exemptions for small retailers there could be a longer phase out period to help them get prepared. This may assist small retailers while not dropping the ball in moving away from single use plastic bags.

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?

If smaller retailers are exempted then I believe exemptions should be based on the volume of single use bags they distribute rather than number of their employees. Some companies have large numbers of staff with a small retail component while others have the opposite. This is why I would prefer to see no exemptions, as trying to define a threshold will be problematic and unfair in some instances.

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?

As per the consultation document it was found that an implementation period of 9 months was not long enough in Western Australia and they extended this by a further 6 months. Retailers will need sufficient time to source their supply chains for alternatives as well as test the

reliability of supply. I would suggest that 12 months may be a better timeframe both for retailers and the public.

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

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

It is likely that sourcing alternatives to single use plastic bags could prove problematic for some retailers. 12 months would allow time for retailers to secure their supply chains for alternatives to single use plastic bags. There may also be cases where retailers have either pre-purchased or signed supply agreements for single use plastic bags. These purchases and agreements should be given enough time to play out during the phase out period. 12 months will also give the public sufficient time to transition to multiple use bags.

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).

I do agree that the social and environmental benefits will outweigh any financial costs associated with implementing the phase out. These benefits may be hard to quantify initially as they will most likely become apparent in the following years and decades. By reducing our waste in the present we will reduce the costs of dealing with it in the future and help to sustain the environment of New Zealand for future generations. What could be more important than that? The return on the investment may not yield a financial profit but this is not the point of minimising waste and the financial model of reasoning should take a back seat. The point is to protect this fragile planet before it's too late.

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?

Yes, there are cheap and readily available alternatives to single use plastic bags in New Zealand. All of the major supermarket chains already provide multiple use alternatives at low cost. The

passing of this mandatory phase out legislation would confirm and increase a market for eco-friendly multi-use bags and allow companies to invest in the research, development and production of sustainable bags. I personally feel that it would be great to see a revival in traditional flax bags (kete) as they are an eco-friendly and organic product of cultural significance to New Zealand. There could be employment opportunities for the manufacturing of kete and other sustainable multiuse bags.

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)

Earlier this year the Danish Ministry of Environment and Food published a report that found a single multiuse cotton bag would need to be used 7,100 times before it would offset the energy and CO2 emissions that it took to make it when compared to plastic bags. This was at the upper end of the scale for multiuse bags, however, if the mandatory phase out of single use plastic bags is to be a holistic success then the alternatives that are offered to the public will also need to have net benefits in term of the energy and CO2 emissions it took to create them. What would be the point in cleaning up our oceans at the expense of the atmosphere? As part of the implementation of the phase out there needs to be information supplied to both retailers and the public regarding the facts behind some of the alternatives such as how many times a bag type should be reused, how environmentally friendly they are in relation to each other and how, if and where they can be recycled. Information like this will allow people to make informed decisions about the best types of alternatives they choose.

Education and understanding around our impact on the environment will be the key to changing minds regarding plastic bag habits. I believe a national information campaign is the right way to go and utilising social media, TV, radio and printed information are all avenues that should be used. Retailers may be able to offer loyalty schemes that reward customers for using their multiuse bags in return for shopping at their stores. Perhaps a bar code on a bag could be scanned and after so many uses there is a reward. The 5 cent rebate currently offered by some New World stores may assist in getting people to use multiuse bags and it would be good to see incentives like this common place in all supermarkets. Countdown's 'Bags for Good' scheme is another great way of motivating people to use multiuse bags. The one off cost will appeal to many and handing old bags over at the point of replacement will help to see that old bags are recycled.

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

My family is prepared to adjust to life without single use plastic bags. Any inconvenience to us is a small price to pay for reducing our impact on the environment. A 12 month lead in period would allow us to acclimatise to the new conditions and make the necessary changes to our routines as well as purchase multiuse alternatives.

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

Perhaps a good place to start is by asking those on the ground at the dumps and transfer stations. They know better than most what is sitting in the piles of trash they deal with on a daily basis. Although this may not be seen as entirely scientific the knowledge of the men and women

on the ground cannot be underestimated and possibly with a little additional training they could become an integral part in monitoring and estimating the reduction in plastic waste. They will be the first ones to notice a difference through and after the phase out.

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

I am 100% behind the phase out of single use plastic bags and I hope it does not stop there. I worked in construction for a number of years and the volume of plastic waste I saw used to make me shudder. I was embarrassed when I took trailer loads of plastic wrapping to the tip. There needs to be a complete shift in how society views plastic which will only come through education and further restrictions and guidelines on the use of plastics. There needs to be better controls and guidelines around packaging in particular. Manufacturers have free reign over how they package their products and put little to no thought into the afterlife of their packaging. There seems to be a fixation with packaging inside packaging that is inside packaging. For example, a bag of bolts, a bag of nuts and a bag of washers all in a bag. Four bags to do the job of one. Or 24 small bags of chips in one bag just out of convenience. For the most part duplicating packaging like this is completely unnecessary and we are substituting ethical management of packaging with convenience and laziness. I sincerely hope the government continues to invest in education and reform relating to further minimisation of plastic waste.

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.

Submissions close at 5.00 pm on Friday 14 September 2018.