

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

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Submitter Type:

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

NZ does not have the infrastructure to make the required industrial composting available to the public to compost compostable bags. Biodegradable bags will break down into micro plastics which are not acceptable to our environment, particularly the ocean. There is the issue of the plastic bags which are not disposed of in any waste system can blow around and enter the ocean and are a risk to sealife. There is also the issue in the ocean of breaking down into micro plastics if a biodegradable bag and not having the condition to breakdown properly if a compostable bag.

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

I do not see any reason that they should be? Education is needed by MfE to create understanding of why plastic bags are being phased out. This then encourages behaviour change by retailers and customers. MfE needs to research and provide the information of better alternatives such as paper bags or boxes. There is a current issue where New World supermarket is providing jute bags which are lined with plastic. MfE should be doing life cycle assessment research on the alternatives to single use plastic bags to find the best alternatives. Information to the public will help behaviour change.

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

Yes

Notes

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

Currently maintaining the environment in the long term is more important than the economic costs. These are short term economic costs to benefit the environment both now and in the future. There could be higher economic costs in the long term if we do not

look after the environment and take action now. NZ needs to take a balanced look of economic and environmental costs both long term and short term.

Clause

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

Position

No

Notes

Alternatives are provided by the commercial sector who do not understand the environmental impacts. For example the jute bags lined with plastic sold in supermarkets as an alternative to single use plastic bags. Is this better? There is no information or education provided to the customer to know if this is better for the environment. MfE needs to do research and find the best alternatives. They then need to educate retailers and customers of the best alternatives. Life cycle assessment of alternative products is the best method to analyse the environmental impacts. Life cycle assessment provides the information to fit with the concept of a Circular Economy. Education by MfE can assist behaviour change. It is an important role by the MfE as it is independent. The packaging forum and council could maybe play a role in providing better alternatives?

Clause

9a. If no, what do you think is missing currently that would need to be available?

Notes

Alternatives are provided by the commercial sector but do they research the environmental impacts. For example the jute bags lined with plastic sold in supermarkets as an alternative to single use plastic bags. Is this better? There is no information or education provided to the customer to know if this is better for the environment. MfE needs to do research and find the best alternatives. They then need to educate retailers and customers of the best alternatives. Life cycle assessment of alternative products is the best method to analyse the environmental impacts. Life cycle assessment provides the information to fit with the concept of a Circular Economy. Education by MfE can assist behaviour change. An alternative in NZ could be to use flax kete bags?

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

national information campaign and mobile phone app for shoppers

Notes

This question is incorrectly written I believe. To talk about offsetting environmental impacts a comparison needs to be made with an alternative product. Which product has the least environmental impact? This is done through comparing the life cycle assessment of different products. I do not think you can "offset the environmental impacts of producing them". The environmental impacts have still been made producing a plastic bag.

Clause

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

Notes

MfE to provide the information of the best alternatives to shopping bags. We need research based information. Otherwise we have the commercial market providing us for example compostable plastic bags or coffee cups when there is no easily accessible infrastructure to support the composting.

Clause

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

Notes

My suggestion in NZ is we use flax kete bags instead of single use plastic bags. This could possibly provide employment to New Zealanders. Maybe children at primary school could be taught how to make kete bags for their family.