



PROPOSED MANDATORY
PHASE OUT OF SINGLE-USE
PLASTIC SHOPPING BAGS
SUBMISSION

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Question 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, oxodegradable, biodegradable and compostable) plastic?

Yes, I do agree with the proposed mandatory phase out of the sale or distribution of single-use plastic shopping bags in New Zealand.

As detailed throughout this document, there are many reasons why I believe that this proposal would have a beneficial effect on New Zealand. Plastic bags are very common, distributed all over New Zealand due to their ease of use. It has become apparent however that their disposable nature is having a large negative effect on the environment.

It would be easy for one to think that degradable plastic would have little effect on the environment. "Degradable plastics" aren't as much better for the environment as regular plastic however such plastics often require specific and unnatural conditions in order to break down meaning that in regular they simply will not break down. Other "degradable plastics" simply degrade into smaller forms of plastic rather than actually fully degrading like other materials.

Question 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?

- a. less than 50 microns in thickness**
- b. less than 70 microns in thickness**
- c. other (please specify)**

I would prefer the option of phasing out any bag being less than 70 microns in thickness.

Queensland had issues with bags being distributed which were "barely compliant" with the 35 micron minimum which was being imposed. If New Zealand made the minimum thickness of bags 50 microns then it is likely that consumers will still treat the bags as single use bags, throwing them away soon after getting them. By making the minimum thickness 70 microns, bags will be significantly different to the sub 35 micron bags distributed by many stores at the moment. This difference will mean that bags are more durable which will allow and encourage them to be re used multiple times. The goal of phasing out single-use plastic bags is to have bags which will be used more than once. By only slightly altering the thickness of the bags, it is much easier for people to consider them as the same and to throw them out as if they were the same, which defeats the point of the proposed change. Secondly, the added weight that would come with the extra thickness would mean that loose bags will be easier to deal with. As the majority of plastic bags are currently being thrown out there is a huge problem with them getting caught in the wind. Landfills need to put barriers up specifically for bags and they still do not catch all of the them. Many bags fly loose from public bins as well causing pollution all around the country. Thicker, heavier bags would be able to be disposed of properly without getting caught in the wind.

Question 3

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

No, I am not currently aware of types of single-use plastic bags that should be exempt from a phase out.

Question 4

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

No, I do not currently manufacture, sell or provide plastic bags in any way.

Question 5

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

No, I do not think smaller retailers should be exempt from a phase out.

Single-use plastic bags which are distributed by smaller retailers are just as damaging to the environment as single-use plastic bags distributed by larger retailers. The phase out is proposed for a reason, to be beneficial for the environment. If that is the reason, then the environment needs to be put first not any particular business. There is arguably a small financial cost in using an alternative to plastic bags, but that cost is minimal and just like the bigger retailers, smaller retailers have the opportunity to pass on any extra costs to the consumer, meaning that smaller businesses are no worse off than bigger ones. If there was to be a maximum number of people employed for plastic bag sales to be allowed then it could lead to businesses capping their employment purely to comply and be able to distribute plastic bags. This would mean that plastic bags could be distributed at high levels which are barely legal. It could also mean that businesses are not growing to their full potential and that jobs for New Zealanders would not be created when they could be.

Question 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?

Not applicable.

Question 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?

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

a. two months

b. nine months

c. one year d. other (please specify)

No, I do not agree with the timing of the phase out.

Businesses will already have stocks of plastic bags which will take time to use up, especially since many people will start to use plastic bags more scarcely now that extra attention has been brought to them with this proposal. Businesses may have contacts in place with bag manufacturers to continue to supply them for a particular amount of time. Businesses also need time to determine how they are going to change. They need to determine a solution, such as which type of alternative bag they would like to use. They also then need to implement that solution which may mean setting up deals with other bagging companies and for more reusable bags to be made. This process could easily take more than six months if done well. It would be beneficial for New Zealand for businesses to have enough time to come up with a good alternative to single-use bags rather than just a solution which they need to implement quickly which they may just stick to. In Western Australia a nine month phase out period took place but in that time frame issues were faced. The majority of New Zealand consumers have been using plastic bags for several decades and they are currently engrained in our culture. It will take a while for consumers to get used to the change to alternative bagging.

I think that one year is a more appropriate phase-out period as it allows consumers to adjust but more importantly allows businesses to adjust and accommodate properly.

Question 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?

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

Yes, I do agree that the benefits expected from implementing a mandatory phase out of single-use plastic bags exceed the costs expected from exceeding the phase out.

Firstly, the cost of providing an alternative such as reusable bags would be very minimal in terms of the cost of running a business. Obviously, the cost of producing a thicker bag or bag of different material would be more expensive but then once such a bag is produced it will be used more often and thus less of them will need to be produced. This will at least partially counter the higher productive costs involved with each bag. Most plastic bags used in New Zealand are being produced offshore which means that ditching such bags would not mean job losses for New Zealanders.

New Zealand's environment is beyond any economic value and needs to be put above anything else, it is something that cannot be recovered if ruined. How long the environment stays healthy depends mostly on how well it is treated. Every year, much of the national and local government funding is placed into caring for the environment, by doing things such as providing waste disposal and cleaning up polluted areas of the country. If New Zealand implements a phase out of plastic bags, then it will have a positive effect on the environment meaning that less funding will need to be placed into the environment in order to maintain its health. Much of New Zealand's tourism is based off marketing New Zealand as a healthy country with a clean green image. If we continue to spoil this image through

use of plastic bags then tourism could see a decline, meaning that less money is being brought into the country. The environment is something which takes a lot of effort and money to improve or upheld. If New Zealand can reduce the toll taken, then it could actually be economically cheaper to phase out plastic bags.

Question 9

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

Yes, I do think that reasonably practicable alternatives to single use plastic bags exist in New Zealand.

The main solution would be to use reusable bags instead of single-bags. Most supermarkets already offer this option to customers with many people using such bags. Some supermarkets have already halted the distribution of plastic bags, offering reusable options only. For supermarkets, such as Countdown, to do this under their own accord then it must have been deemed to be reasonably practicable. Bags are available for purchase in store for just NZD\$1 and can be used as many times as wanted. Countdown are also offering free swaps of bags where customers can exchange worn bags for new ones at no cost. This appears to be the most obvious alternative to plastic bags. Re-usable bags will become standard and people will get used to the change over time. Prior to plastic bags, paper bags were the most popular. Although paper bags carry disadvantages such as lacking in a handle and requiring more space to store in bulk, I think that they would suffice fine as a disposable bag option for when one does not happen to have re-usable bags with them.

Question 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)

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

Voluntary incentive schemes by retailers and national information campaigns would both encourage multiple uses of shopping bags.

Firstly, the bags that would be available would be more expensive than the current plastic bags which would encourage consumers to re-use them for their own financial benefit. Companies providing extra incentive for people to re-use their shopping bags would likely improve rates of re-use. This could be through some sort of reward system where customers could accumulate points or discounts each time they re-use their shopping bag.

A national information campaign would also likely be beneficial in aiding the number of bags being reused. Many people understand that single-use plastic bags are detrimental to the environment, but many people are not aware of the extent to which they are. If information could be distributed showing just how bad plastic bags can be compared to reusable ones, people may feel more obliged to do their part for the environment.

Another way I believe people would be highly encouraged to re-use multiple use bags would be by offering refunds for bags which are in good condition. Sometimes people do not plan on buying things from shops, so they may not have a multiple use bag with them. It would be a hassle for them to buy more multiple use bags if they already have enough at home so being able to refund the bags would mean that people could buy extra bags and return them when they come back to the shop. This would mean that people would have no need to throw away extra bags as they could simply return them for their money back. There would need to be conditions placed on this such as returning the bags in a clean and tidy condition for instance, but it would still be better than throwing away a bag.

Question 11

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

Having an easy and gradual adjustment would be the biggest help for me and my family when switching to alternative bagging options.

It would be important that a fair amount of time to be given in order to make the transition. It became a habit for me and my family to rely on the plastic bags provided by shops to carry things home. I have already started to use reusable bags but when I first started to use them I would often forget them and would have to resort to the plastic bags at the shop. With time it has become habit to bring my reusable bags and I have now adjusted well. It is only fair to have a decent grace period for people to adjust to using alternative bags.

Question 12

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

Data and monitoring of single use plastic bags entering the market could be tricky to do but there are ways to do it.

Continuing to work with stakeholders would definitely be beneficial as they could provide their opinions on how to monitor. Working with firms such as current distributor of single-use plastic bags and waste disposal or recycling firms would likely also prove beneficial. Businesses who would be affected by the proposed phase out would no doubt be interested in if it is worth it and many would likely provide information about their baggage sales. Waste disposal and recycling firms would also be very knowledgeable in the plastic bags and would already have a baseline of how many bags are entering their firms. By comparing with how many bags they get after the change, it will be clear to see if the change has worked. New Zealand will soon have a baseline monitoring system for coastal litter which will allow comparisons to be made about how many bags are entering our oceans.

It is entirely likely that the proposed phase out will not be without any kinks which is why I believe a review process should be set up. The ban of bags could be reviewed on a regular basis and altered when necessary. Reviews will be able to be less frequent over time as whatever problems are discovered are then subsequently extinguished.

Question 13

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

I believe that the proposed phase out of single use plastic bags is necessary for New Zealand. As discussed throughout this submission and pointed out in the consultation document, there are many reasons why the distribution of single-use plastic bags is having a negative effect on New Zealand's environment. Plastic bags are impacting the health of New Zealand's marine life, they are polluting our coastline and natural resources as well as potentially limiting our economy through tourism prospects. I believe that I have pointed out adequate reasons why the proposal could and should be implemented. There are both retailers and consumers who are currently operating without plastic bags and appear to be doing so just fine. One of the main reasons one may be opposed to the proposal would be for economic reasons. I believe that I have shown that it is economically viable and may even be economically beneficial, if executed properly, to phase out single-use bags. Another possible reason to oppose the proposal would be the practicality that plastic bags provide. I have suggested that there are alternatives to plastic bags which are just as practical but do not hurt the environment in the process. Even if the practicality of reusable bags were slightly less in the short term, if we continue to damage our environment we will be creating many more problems. In the long-term plastic bags would definitely be more practical as they create less problems. All of the details of the proposal have been shown to be possible. Plastic bags have caused enough damage to the New Zealand Environment and need to be phased out.