

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

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Reference no: 709

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

No

Notes

They are only rarely "single-use" in New Zealand - the majority are reused as rubbish bin liners, and if the supermarket bags are phased out, they will be replaced by the much thicker bin liners which are currently sold, thereby increasing rather than decreasing the amount of plastic going into landfills. In Ireland, the virtual elimination of plastic shopping bags because of a very high bag tax led to a 77% increase in the purchase of rubbish bin liners which contain up to 76% more plastic than conventional plastic shopping bags and a 21% overall increase in plastics consumed.

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

It is the much thicker plastic bags which need to be phased out, not the thin ones, otherwise the amount of plastic going into our landfills will increase rather than decrease.

Clause

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

Position

Yes

Notes

The thinnest ones, which are routinely used as rubbish bin liners, should be exempt, otherwise thicker bin liners will be used, thereby increasing rather than decreasing the amount of plastic going into landfills.

Clause

3a. If yes, what are they and why should they be exempt?

Notes

The thinnest ones, which are routinely used as rubbish bin liners, should be exempt, otherwise thicker bin liners will be used, thereby increasing rather than decreasing the amount of plastic going into landfills.

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

It is much easier to use alternatives to plastic bags for small amounts of shopping - it is the big supermarkets etc that should be exempted, as they are much more likely to have customers who require multiple bags for their big weekly purchases - few people are going to purchase 10 to 12 reusable bags to take into a supermarket.

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

They shouldn't be exempted - they should be the only ones targeted (see answer to previous question)

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

No

Notes

It is going to take longer than 6 months to ensure that replacement rubbish bin liners which are as thin as supermarket bags and which will not therefore add to the amount of plastic going into landfills are available on the market.

Clause

7a. If no, what do you think would be a more appropriate phase-out period?

Position

one year

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

No

Notes

For the past 2 years, the amount of plastic going into my weekly council rubbish collection (i.e., to the landfill) has reduced to near-zero because of the introduction of soft plastic collection points around NZ. None of this reduction has been because of so-called "single-use" plastic shopping bags, because they are ALL reused as rubbish bin liners. You are focusing on the wrong items if you want to reduce "single-use" plastic - you should be focusing on the genuine "single-use" plastic, i.e., wrapping etc which is impossible to reuse.

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

No, not for supermarket shopping - no one is going to have 10 to 12 of the alternatives to take into a supermarket for their weekly shopping.

Clause

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

Notes

What is missing from your proposal is the ongoing availability (even if at a cost) of the current type of thin shopping bag at large retailers such as supermarkets. Otherwise people are going to have to purchase a large number of thick bags for use only once a week for the main supermarket shopping trip - which is not going to happen.

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

Put a high (20c+) price on the current single-use bags, but do not ban them.

Clause

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

Notes

Some sensible policy on reducing genuine single-use plastic packaging, rather than banning the current shopping bags - I refuse to call them "single-use" when they are not that, in the majority of cases.

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

Surveys of rubbish collected for landfills - that is the standard way in which our "throwaway" habits are currently monitored.

Clause

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

Notes

Don't do it - focus on other plastic packaging which genuinely is "single-use" and is ending up on beaches and the sea such as straws, cups, utensils, the lids on takeaway drinks, and microfibers from synthetic fabrics.