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Sent: Thursday, 22 February 2018 5:56 PM
To: Plastic Bag Ban
Subject: Shire of Mundaring submission - plastic bag ban

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Shire of Mundaring supports the proposed State-wide ban on single use plastic shopping bags. This issue was considered by Council in June 2017 and the Council report noted:

Environmentally, there are multiple impacts from the use of plastic bags, including:

- *use of non-renewable resources to make plastic bags;*
- *large volumes of single use bags are sent to landfill;*
- *most plastic bags take hundreds of years to break down; and*
- *littered plastic bags can break down into persistent microplastics, enter rivers and oceans and cause deaths of animals that swallow or become entangled in plastic.*

It should be noted that the different types of alternative or reusable bags also have environmental impacts during production, transport and disposal. These can actually be greater than the environmental impact of single use plastic bags if reusable bags are not reused enough times, alternative bags are made from virgin materials, or the bags are not recyclable.

However reviews of consumer behaviour following State-wide bans of lightweight plastic bags in other Australian states have found that reusable alternatives may still be thrown away after a single use, or not reused enough times to have a lower environmental impact.

It is important that the community education campaign goes beyond awareness of the introduction of the plastic bag ban, and promotes behaviour change towards using, reusing or recycling bags with fewer overall environmental impacts. The primary aim of the ban may be to prevent litter and downstream impacts in aquatic systems, but an important opportunity would be lost if there was no direction towards the types of replacement bags that would be most beneficial overall. Residents have expressed a desire to 'do the right thing' but need information on the hidden costs or benefits of different bag types to make informed decisions.

The issue of 'degradable' or 'biodegradable' shopping bags was not specifically considered by Council. However, if these types of bags do not actually biodegrade in the natural environment or domestic composting conditions, or only break down from a visible bag into persistent microplastics, then they would need to be included in the ban for it to be effective in addressing plastic pollution.

Regards

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