

Plastic Bag Ban
Department of Water and Environmental Regulation
Locked Bag 33
CLOISTERS SQUARE
WA 6850

I congratulate the Government on its plan to implement a plastic bag ban. It has been a long time coming. I am in favour of the strongest ban possible for all single use plastic starting with lightweight shopping bags – but this should only be the first leg of a journey.

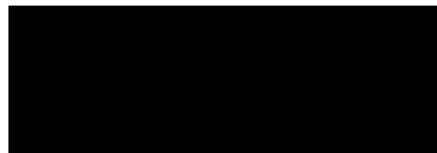
I believe that any biodegradable, degradable and/or compostable bag that breaks down into micro-plastics should be included in the ban. However, there are a number of products that are using non-fossil fuel material for bags and wraps e.g starch as a source material and I believe these should be excluded as this type of experimentation and innovation will only increase once the existing bags are banned. These types of bags already exist as doggie bags so it would be good if local governments could be encouraged to use them rather than the solid yellow plastic doggie bags.

I have been using reusable bags for all my shopping for a number of years now and purchase produce from the greengrocer in lightweight mesh bags. I won't be purchasing any new bags when the ban comes into force. I don't use a bin liner – I put all our food scraps in a Bokashi bin but if there is anything "wet" to go in the bin then it gets wrapped in newspaper.

Many of the alternatives to plastic bags have a heavy environmental footprint such as cloth bags and thicker plastic bags. I believe thicker bags should be included in the ban. Encouraging customers to use boxes (as is already the case for Bunnings customers and they are also available at Gilberts which sells fruit and vegetables) would be an excellent alternative. When you shop at IGA Express in Denmark there is a box outside full of shopping bags. If you forget your bags you can use these bags and return them either on your next visit or when you are next in town. It would be good if all supermarkets had such a facility outside their stores – not new bags but pre-loved bags. Also this offers an opportunity for the elderly who love to sew. If they were provided with used garment cloth (think of all those t-shirts and denim at the opp shops) they could "whip up" some bags in no time and make a fantastic contribution to our environment.

So much pre-packaged food is packed in plastic and the plastic is only used for the time it takes to get the food home and then the wrapping is binned. This type of packaging which has become ubiquitous (even in fruit and vegetable shops unfortunately) should be banned. It has only been in the last five years that there has been an explosion in this type of packaging for meat, and fruit and vegetables usually sold at a reduced price so it would be relatively simple for stores to revert to their former habits.

I believe (and hope it's the case) that once we have evidence that there has been a reduction in plastic litter reaching our waterways (or washed up on the beach/river) people will be encouraged to take more action. So we need some good research being undertaken over the next few years to see if that is in fact the case. Once the ban has been in place for a while people will get used to it. However, we need to keep providing our citizens with exciting sustainable alternatives that are not going to create problems in the future.



Leonie Stubbs

