

Is a Plastic Bag Ban or Levy the Only Solution?

This issue is never going to go away and while our sector has been actively working towards the reduction of plastic bag use in our stores, the reality is that if we don't keep up the push to reduce use in every single store, we will be forced into extreme measures to satisfy the global environmental push to reduce waste.

It is my belief that every single retailer must develop a waste management plan and ensure all team members are signatories to this plan. Perhaps you should set your own targets of bag use on a weekly basis and in turn reward your team members with the resultant savings.

Each store is going to face the reality, that either we make it happen or we are going to be forced into making it happen. It's your choice, remember it is also your responsibility as apart of the business community.

John Markham

Mandatory bans or levies on plastic bags are the only way Victoria will successfully cut their consumption, said the state's peak environment group.

The call follows a plan unveiled by Environment Minister John Thwaites at a meeting of all Environment Ministers recently to try and force all small retailers to join the National Packaging Covenant (NPC) in phasing out plastic bags.

"This is a ludicrous plan. If Mr Thwaites is serious about cutting the scourge of plastic bags then a ban or levy is the only option," said Environment Victoria's Zero Waste Campaign Director Jenny Henty.

"For the past two years, major retailers have shown they cannot be relied upon to cut plastic bag use, dismally failing to voluntarily reduce bag consumption. The NPC is a failure. We are dismayed that the Minister wants to extend such a failure to small retailers."

Industry Issue



"A levy or a ban is such a simple, sensible, easy solution and the longer we fail to implement them, the greater the environmental damage will be."

By 2004, retailers were supposed to have reduced plastic bag use by 25 per cent. In reality they struggled to get to 20 per cent. Just 4 per cent of small businesses took part, whereas 25 per cent were meant to have signed on.

Ms Henty said Environment Ministers must not kowtow to industry any longer. "For too long industry has got away scot free, tinkering on the edges while billions of plastic bags choke our waterways, parks and landfill sites, maiming and killing thousands of animals."

She said small businesses stood to benefit from a ban or levy.

"Supplying plastic bags free of charge forces costs up, which is reflected in prices. A ban or levy would create a level playing field and small retailers would be better able to compete against the big supermarkets."

"Ideally, a levy would be placed on suppliers to be passed down to retailers, as the majority of plastic bags are imported."

When Ireland introduced a 27 cent levy on plastic bags in 2002, use decreased by 90 per cent over a six month period.



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