

# Plastic Bags

## Clean Up Australia Says Community Favours Plastic Bags Ban in All Retail Outlets

New research has revealed that 81 per cent of adult Australians are in favour of a ban on single-use plastic bags.

A Newspoll survey commissioned by Clean Up Australia in April shows this sentiment is felt Australia-wide, with similar results among both men and women, across all age groups and for both white and blue collar workers.

"Even people who say they always use plastic bags at the shops want to get rid of them, with more than half (58 per cent) in favour of a ban," said Ian Kiernan AO, Chairman and Founder, Clean Up Australia.

"The community's overwhelming desire to protect the environment and our wildlife is also reflected in people's bag habits. 81 per cent of people say they are now likely to use alternative bags, whereas four years ago only 30 per cent said they would use alternatives."

"As a result of this sea change supermarkets should reach their 50 per cent reduction target by December. Sadly, thousands of other retailers who issue almost half of all plastic bags are way behind. The end result is at best a 25-30 per cent reduction in overall plastic bag use by the end of this year." Mr Kiernan added.



**"If shoppers do use a plastic bag, 46 per cent say it is because they are always given one by retailers and 35 per cent say there are no alternatives available to purchase in store. This retailer behaviour must change."**

Customers should be given the opportunity to say no to plastic bags or to buy an alternative bag.

"Many retailers think replacing plastic bags with paper or reusable bags and/or charging a small fee for alternative bags is bad for business. However, retailers, large or small, who've made the change will tell you quite the opposite. Benefits reported include loyal, repeat customers, added marketing opportunities and cost savings - all good business practices."

Clean Up Australia's collaboration with retailers, local, State and Federal Governments and the community under the Say No to Plastic Bags program is achieving phenomenal results - two billion less bags per year within three years. However we need to be aiming much higher and Clean Up Australia is even more committed to working in partnership with retailers, government and the community to deliver practical solutions."

"If we are to get rid of plastic bags from our environment, the Government must put apathetic retailers on notice. A voluntary agreement for a phase out by December 2008 alone will not get us over the line. If retailers don't change their ways now then a ban on bags must be introduced no later than 1 January 2009." Mr Kiernan concluded.

*Footnote: While generally our members are working on the problem, we must never say we are doing our best. Remind your team members constantly and ration bags to the checkout operators. Reward your team for working on the issue and reducing your plastic bag use, it is often these small incentives that work best.*

John Markham

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