

Plastic Bag Trial Begins In Victoria

The Victorian Government launched an Australian-first trial on Sunday 17th August that will test a charge on plastic checkout bags. Environment and Climate Change Minister Gavin Jennings introduced the four-week trial at Fountain Gate Shopping Centre, Narre Warren.

Nominated supermarket shoppers in Fountain Gate, Wangaratta and Warrnambool will pay a 10c government and industry charge for each plastic checkout bag in a bid to gauge customer response and reduce Victoria's use of one billion bags a year.

Mr Jennings also announced the Brumby Government will distribute 50,000 free reusable bags to vulnerable Victorians in the trial areas, through VicRelief agencies and DHS disability services.

"We want to find the most effective way to reduce the use of plastic bags, while taking into account the impact on low-income and vulnerable residents in the trial areas. These bags will enable vulnerable Victorians to avoid the charge and do their bit for the environment," he said. "Plastic checkout bags are a short-term convenience with long-term environmental impacts and the charge will prompt shoppers to ask themselves if they really need a bag," Mr Jennings said. "The trial will help to identify the best way of cutting plastic bag use and achieve the best result for customers, businesses and the environment."



The Government is working with Coles, Safeway and Ritchies IGA to conduct the trial which will continue until 14th September. The results of the trial will be used by Australia's Environment Ministers to consider the next steps in reducing plastic bag use when they meet in Sydney in November."

Metcash Technical Manager Steven Newton said IGA was proud to be involved in the trial. "IGA strongly supports initiatives which help the local community, and reducing plastic bag use is a great way to improve our environment and use our resources more efficiently," Mr Newton said.

Steve Miller from the Ritchies Group says that the trial at their Narre Warren and Berwick stores has been received well by customers and staff members. Their Narre Warren store distributed more than 10,000 pamphlets in the period leading up to the trial and during the first week the store sold hundreds of green bags at a reduced price. The number of plastic bags sold during that time amounted to approx 400 compared with the usual 2,500 plastic bags that normally would have been used during that time.

Funds raised from the trial will be devoted to local environmental projects. For more information or to provide feedback call 136 186 or visit sustainability.vic.gov.au



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