



South Australia

Minister for Environment and Conservation Gail Gago on June 18th 2008 introduced legislation in the South Australian Parliament that seeks to ban light weight plastic shopping bags.

These plastic bags are described as made of polyethylene polymer with a thickness of less than 35 microns and are generally used by supermarkets and take-away food outlets. This does not include 'barrier bags' dispensed from a roll for example those used for fruit and vegetables. Also not included are heavier style retail bags – usually used by such outlets as clothing and department stores.

Under the proposed legislation the transition to the ban starts on 1 January 2009. The ban is proposed to come into full effect on Monday 4 May 2009. During the 4-month transition period, any retailer who still provides single-use plastic bags must also provide alternatives for carrying goods so consumers have a choice.

Retailers should start planning the alternatives now and begin to help customers prepare for the change.

MGA Comment

The MGA and independent supermarkets around Australia are extremely conscious to further their sustainability by continuously introducing initiatives to significantly reduce any negative impact their businesses may have on the environment and climate change. The MGA welcomes the trial of any new initiative that will significantly assist to reduce consumer Plastic Shopping Bag usage, however, on behalf of its members it cannot support imposing a tax or levy upon consumers as a manner to force consumers behavior to seek alternatives. The MGA believes that the Independent supermarket channel has the capacity to educate and encourage consumers to significantly reduce their usage of Plastic Shopping Bags. This can be done with instore promotional signage, instore theming, 'green check out aisles' and of course through staff communicating in a positive manner with customers. This involves the community within which the supermarket operates and can be fun and very productive for the long term!

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