

## **Waiheke Local Board feedback on the government's proposed mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags**

**The Waiheke Local Board supports the mandatory phase out of single-use all plastic shopping bags. Additionally, the Waiheke Local Board seeks to see the legislation broadened to include:**

- (1) other plastic bags**
- (2) other single-use plastic products**

Waiheke Countdown was the first Countdown supermarket in NZ to charge for single use plastic bags at the check-out. This commenced in May 2016 and the Waiheke Local Board helped broker this agreement with Progressive Foods after significant action from local Waihekeans particularly the long-established Bring Your Own Bag collective who have been making reusable bags for local shoppers for many years. Countdown has shown proactive support for the Government's proposed phase out by its recent removal of the biodegradable plastic bags from its Waiheke store. This was following their initial desire to have a two-month trial using biodegradable bags. The success of this transition to removal of biodegradable bags shows how receptive the NZ public is to the banning of plastic bags.

Waiheke Island is a unique island environment within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park. The marine environment, and the harmful impacts of plastic on marine life in our area, are vitally important issues for our people as demonstrated by survey and consultations. In this matter the local board represents widely held values.

Being on an island means the cost of getting waste to landfill on the mainland is very high. All efforts to reduce waste, and especially packaging waste, are a win for local ratepayers as well as for the receiving environments.

Waiheke has a proud tradition of engaging locals in waste minimization activities, including the board-supported Waiheke Resources Trust which has been educating our community on waste minimization for 21 years. We support initiatives that reduce waste and eradicate plastic pollution.

### **Support for the Phase Out**

The phase out should cover plastic bags of all thicknesses of plastic to avoid bag producers producing bags just above the statutory threshold and most importantly to reduce plastic waste. It should cover all retailers to ensure that the phase out is managed consistently and simultaneously across the retail sector.

We share the concerns outlined in the Auckland Council submission that there may be negative consequences from basing exclusions to the ban on the thickness of the bags as the means for determining what is "single-use." We support a robust definition of a reusable bag – for example that a reusable bag is made from material that allows it to be re-used up to 120 times.

### **Broaden the Scope**

The board recommends that the phase out should be broader than single-use plastic bags and that it should cover other types of plastic products which cause environmental damage such as plastic drinking straws, single use cups/crockery/cutlery, aluminium can six-pack plastic rings, and dog-droppings bags.

Container deposit legislation that would introduce refunds on alternative drink containers, for example, would have an immediate impact on reducing litter in our streets, parks and waterways.

### **Support the six-month period with compliance**

The board supports the six-month phase out period with fines phasing in after three months. Fines need to be set at a level sufficient to act as a real disincentive to the use of plastic bags. Compliance monitoring must be resourced to a level where retailers, and the public, can have a realistic expectation that complaints will be followed up.

### **Promote strategies to encourage sustainable retailer and consumer behaviour**

The act's implementation must adequately resource a team to communicate and to educate retailers and consumers about the development of sustainable behaviour around waste. Strategies could include:

- the return of worn out reusable shopping bags for free replacement
- deposit refunds on quality reusable bags from branded high-end retailers
- support for community groups to produce reusable bags from local waste materials, such as the Bring Your Own Bag Collective mentioned earlier and Maori initiatives such as kete-making workshops
- mall or shopping precinct reusable bags in preference to individual retailer bags
- responsible stewardship by retailers managing their own waste eg. pizza boxes and coffee cups
- a national annual prize for innovative anti-packaging initiatives
- inclusion of plastic waste management actions in sustainable business goals at business award ceremonies.

### **Environmental Monitoring**

It is essential that the impact of the phase-out be effectively monitored and that those results be readily available to retailers, and the public, to highlight the environmental impact of the phase out. Monitoring should include, but not exclusively, marine micro-bead concentrations, plastic bag landfill rates, and reusable bag usage rates.

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