

In regards with the Plastic Bag Ban, we recommend the following :

1. Biodegradable, degradable and compostable bags should be included in the ban. Given the characteristics of the 3 different bags, as explained on page 14 of the paper and considering that the impacts on the environment and on the wildlife are unlikely to be improved by a switch to degradable plastics or compostable bags, the Western Australian Government should include these bags in the ban.
2. The single-use lightweight plastic bag ban should be extended to heavier department store plastic bags. As mentioned on page 13 of the paper, the result of a recent cost benefit analysis of plastic bag ban options found that the greatest benefit would be derived from a ban on lightweight and heavier plastic bags. There would be no net economic cost to such a ban. This would also avoid the unintended consequence of retailers supplying heavier weight plastic bags for free after the ban is being implemented. Finally, if heavier weight plastic bags are used as an alternative to lightweight plastic bags, the amount of plastic in the waste stream may increase. A shift from lightweight to heavyweight plastic bags may increase the costs of waste services provided by local governments.
3. Plastic barrier bags for unpacked perishable food should be included in the ban. Alternatives to plastic barrier bags should be available at grocery stores for consumers to buy or be given by the retailers, for a period of time. For products that require the use of a bag, alternatives such as muslin bags made of fine cotton that are washable would be a good option.
4. Community education should be provided on alternatives to plastic used around the house (newspaper, plastic bread bags, etc). In South Australia, a plastic bag ban was introduced in 2008. A review of the ban in 2011 found an increase in bin liner used by households after the ban from 15% to 80% as they couldn't reuse their single use plastic bags for that purpose anymore.
5. At the moment, paper and cardboard bags are not included in the ban. As mentioned in the paper on page 21, single use paper bags have high environmental impact. This is partially offset by the use of recycled content, but the high energy costs associated with their production, combined with their single-use, makes them less than ideal as an alternative to single-use plastic bags. To avoid the potential situation where retailers selling goods other than food, turn to paper or cardboard bags instead of encouraging consumers to use their own reusable bags when shopping, shouldn't these bags (paper and cardboard) be banned too? Or at last shouldn't a phase out of such bags be planned?

6. Retail stores should make available the cardboard boxes they receive their products in to the customers for them to use to carry their shopping home, similar to what is done at Bunnings.

We thank you for taking the time to read our comments in regards with the Plastic Bag Ban. Please, do not hesitate in contacting us if you have any questions.

Kind regards,

Isabelle Gagnon,
Chairperson, WREN