

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### When did the ban start?

The ban on lightweight plastic bags came into full effect on 1 November 2013, with the implementation of the *Plastic Shopping Bags Ban Act 2013*.

### Which bags are banned?

The plastic shopping bag ban prohibits Tasmanian retailers from supplying shoppers with lightweight (less than 35 microns) plastic shopping bags, to carry or transport goods bought from the retailer.



The degree of variability in plastic bags suggests that sourcing bags greater than about 40 microns would help reduce the chance that no part of the bag is under the 35 micron limit.

### Why are retailers still providing plastic bags?

The ban was introduced to reduce the number of lightweight plastic shopping bags in the environment. Thicker plastic shopping bags are considered to be reusable so are not banned.



### What penalties will apply?

Retailers who don't comply with the ban may be issued with a \$840 Infringement Notice. If prosecuted through the Courts, fines of up to \$3,360 for individuals and \$16,800 for businesses and organisations may be imposed.

Note: these amounts are based on 5, 20 and 100 penalty units respectively and represent the penalty unit value at 1 July 2019. The [current value for penalty units](#) is published on the Justice Department website.

### Can retailers charge for bags?

Under the legislation, retailers are not required to charge customers a fee for bags they supply. Retailers can choose to charge a fee, or continue to incorporate the cost of bags in the goods they sell.

### **Which bags can retailers provide you with?**

The plastic shopping bag ban applies to lightweight (<35 microns), non-biodegradable plastic bags only. The supply of other plastic bags is not restricted. Acceptable bags include compostable biodegradable plastic bags consistent with Australian Standard 4736, re-sealable zipper storage bags, heavier plastic bags (>40 microns, typically used by clothing and department stores) and plastic bags that are an integral part of the packaging (such as bread, frozen foods or ice bags and fruit and vegetable 'barrier' bags).

Some [examples of compliant bags and a list of local suppliers](#) can be found on the EPA website.

### **Why aren't businesses using compostable biodegradable bags?**

Compostable biodegradable plastics that comply with the Australian Standard 4736 are made of materials that under suitable conditions in commercial composting facilities, and in a relatively short time frame, can degrade to the point where microorganisms can completely metabolise them to carbon dioxide, water, biomass and mineral salts.



Their use is not restricted but it is understood that such bags are more expensive for a retailer to provide.

### **How do I know if the bags I supply and/or buy are OK?**

Retailers should check with their supplier if they are unsure about the composition or thickness of the bags they are supplying. Retailers may wish to seek written confirmation in relation to how the supplied bags meet the required thickness and composition as stated in the Tasmanian *Plastic Shopping Bags Ban Act 2013*.

### **Does the ban apply to all retailers in Tasmania?**

Yes. The ban applies to any business giving out plastic bags, regardless of the size of that business. This includes, but is not limited to, large scale businesses like supermarkets, chains and franchises (e.g. hardware, newsagent and liquor stores), small corner stores and take away shops, online businesses selling products from Tasmania, market and fair stalls, and road-side vendors and community events.

### **How can you help your staff explain the ban to customers?**

Display notices explaining the change. Remind customers about the ban and prompt them to bring reusable bags. Remind customers that the ban has been introduced by the Tasmanian Government and is being applied to all retailers in

the State. Explain that this ban is helping to protect the environment by reducing waste and litter. Offer an alternative, compliant bag for customers to use and refer the customer to this website.

Print resources about the ban can be accessed by contacting EPA Tasmania. There is also a 'commercial' which retailers could use to encourage people to bring their own bag/s.

### **What about bin liners?**

Many plastic shopping bags are currently re-used once as bin liners for household rubbish. While there is no one simple replacement for bin liners, you will reduce the need for bin liners by reducing waste, especially by learning how to recycle correctly and manage food and green wastes. Alternatives to bin liners include bread bags and barrier bags.

### **Where can I source compliant shopping bags**

A number of Australian companies now provide reusable bags. Their bags are made from a variety of materials including polyester, organic cotton, hemp, bamboo, linen and even recycled PET plastic bottles. See the [Suppliers List](#).



This example of a practical compact reusable bag is made by  
an Australian company, Onya.

### **How can I recycle plastic bags?**

Plastic bags of any variety are not accepted in kerbside recycling bins because they damage the recycling equipment. Most plastic bags (including LDPE and HDPE and reusable 'green' bags) are, however, recyclable and can be placed in special plastic bags recycling bins provided at major supermarkets.

### **How do I carry products hygienically?**

Barrier bags (typically bags on a roll) can be used to carry any products that you suspect may leak. They can also be used to carry fresh goods such as fruit and vegetables.

Often these products are sealed prior to sale anyway (such as laundry powder and meat trays). Plastic bags that are an integral part of the packaging are not restricted (such as bread bags).

### **What can I use to pick up after my dog?**

In some dog-friendly parks and reserves, local councils provide degradable plastic bags to scoop dog poo. These bags are not banned under the legislation - you can continue to use these bags.

**I work for a not-for-profit/charity organisation. Can I provide plastic bags to my customers?**

You can offer any of the substitutes that are not subject to the ban. Encourage your customers to bring re-usable bags.

**Aren't plastic bags made from a waste product anyway?**

HDPE plastic bags are made from a by-product of petroleum manufacture, as are milk bottles and other products that have a longer life and a greater chance of being recycled. But the main 'driver' behind the plastic bag ban was that it was designed to reduce litter and waste.

**Do biodegradable bags need to have markings on them that state they comply with the Australian Standard?**

No, but if a plastic material claims to be biodegradable and compostable in Australia, it must comply with Australian Standard AS 4736-2006 and if requested, retailers providing these bags in Tasmania will need to be able to validate their compliance with the Standard by providing certification from the supplier/manufacturer.



**SAY HELLO  
TO REUSABLE BAGS.**