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Via email: [plasticbagban@dwer.wa.gov.au](mailto:plasticbagban@dwer.wa.gov.au)

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To whom it may concern,

## **RE IMPLEMENTING A LIGHTWEIGHT SINGLE-USE PLASTIC BAG BAN IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

It is great news that WA is soon to be joining other states, and the retail industry, in banning lightweight, single-use plastic bags. We are encouraged by the environmental focus of the discussion paper and we agree that a ban is the best of the various options identified for reducing single-use plastic litter in WA.

While we do support the proposed bag ban, in general, we do however make these submissions in the hope that this ban is to be viewed as a successful first step in an ongoing regulatory process of dealing with the disproportionate impacts of single-use plastics on our environment in WA.

This submission does not seek to detail the environmental impacts of plastic waste on our environment as these concerns are increasingly accepted and understood, and are dealt with sufficiently in the discussion paper. We do, however, seek to offer some brief suggestions about how to build on the approach proposed in order to use this opportunity to more effectively reduce the impact of single-use plastic waste in our environment.

### **1. The scope of the ban should be expanded**

In addition to the lightweight single-use plastic bags, proposed to be banned under this scheme, the following single-use plastic bags should also be included in the scope of the ban for the same environmental reasons:

- biodegradable, degradable and compostable bags
- lightweight single-use plastic bags without handles, including barrier bags
- heavier weight single-use plastic bags

### **2. A state-wide ban should be implemented in conjunction with a levy approach**

The discussion paper identifies that an unintended consequence of the proposed ban on lightweight plastic bags could be that retailers supply heavier weight plastic bags as an alternative. The paper acknowledges that 'if heavier weight plastic bags are used as an alternative to lightweight plastic bags, the amount of plastic in the waste stream may increase.' And that 'a shift from lightweight to heavy weight plastic bags may increase the costs of waste services provided by local governments'.

With this acknowledgement we suggest it is essential that the government also **include heavier weight single-use plastic bags** in the ban, from the outset, in order to avoid this unintended detrimental consequence.

If these heavier weight and other single-use plastic bags are not to be included in the scope of the ban, we would suggest the government consider **implementing a combined approach which bans all lightweight single-use plastic bags, and also imposes a levy on the supply of heavier weight and other single-use, non-banned, bags**. This would work to help ensure that the aim of reducing plastic waste and environmental harm is achieved by the implementation of the ban, instead of simply shifting reliance to heavier weight and non-banned single use plastics and ultimately increasing the amount of plastic waste in the waste stream and in the environment. The additional levy system would act as another deterrent mechanism, discouraging the use of single-use plastics, and revenue from the levy scheme could also contribute to the continued improvement of plastic waste management and reduction within WA.

### 3. Future steps to be taken

In the future we also hope that the government will further seek to limit the environmental damage caused by other single-use and commonly littered plastic products including:

- Plastic straws
- Plastic cutlery
- Helium balloons

The dangers of plastics in the environment are well known and the consultation process surrounding this proposed ban has shown that the overwhelming majority of West Australians are concerned about the impacts of plastic waste on our environment, and are prepared to make changes in order to protect our environment now and into the future.

This is a great opportunity for the West Australian government to take strong steps in dealing with waste and pollution from single-use plastics with the support of the retail industry and the community. The ban, as detailed in the discussion paper, provides a strong foundation to begin actively reducing plastic waste and it is our hope that the government take this opportunity to rigorously limit the role of a broad range of single-use plastics in WA's future and, through this, to ensure that the aim reducing plastic litter and associated environmental impacts from plastic pollution is able to be achieved.

We appreciate your time and we look forward to working with you towards a plastic litter free future for WA.

Yours Sincerely,

Tessa Mossop.

Environs Kimberley

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