



Simon Corbell MLA

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MEDIA RELEASE

ACT MOVES TO BAN PLASTIC BAGS

Canberra will move to further reduce waste with the introduction of legislation to ban lightweight plastic shopping bags in the ACT, Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Water, Simon Corbell, announced today.

“Plastic bags are a convenience in modern society but they are also a waste problem, contributing to landfill and the litter problem in the ACT,” Mr Corbell said.

Research shows that an average Australian will use 345 plastic bags a year, generating landfill waste that will take more than 50 generations, or 1,000 years, to decompose.

The *Plastic Shopping Bags Ban Bill 2010* will ban the supply of plastic shopping bags of 35 microns or less, generally the type distributed through supermarkets, grocery stores and takeaway food outlets.

A range of bags will be unaffected by the ban, including barrier bags of the type dispensed from a roll to hold items such as fruit or meat and heavier retail bags used in department, footwear and clothing stores.

The Government expects that retailers will provide a range of bags to consumers to replace light weight plastic bags including reuseable ‘green’ bags, paper bags and biodegradable bags which meet Australian Standard AS 4736-2006. The sale of plastic bin liners for waste containers in the home is unaffected by the ban.

Mr Corbell said the legislation was being introduced following widespread consultation carried out in 2009 that highlighted the strong community support for action to reduce plastic bag waste.

It showed that 58% of people contacted in a telephone survey supported action such as ban or levy while among those interviewed in shopping centres, 82% were in favour of the Government taking restrictive action.

The consultation also sought the views of retailers, unions and industry on the best ways to implement any action.

“Even with this strong community backing the Government recognises that adjusting to the ban will require changes, both in consumer behaviours and among retailers,” Mr Corbell said.

“The legislation will take effect from 1 July 2011 with a four month transitional period. During this time, any retailer who still provides single-use plastic bags must also supply alternatives and they must also display signs informing customers of the changes. No light-weight plastic bags can be supplied after 1 November 2011.

“The Government will work with retailers and unions through a Plastic Bag Advisory Group to promote a smooth transition to the new legislation.

“The Government will also assist retailers by undertaking a comprehensive communications campaign to help businesses, retail workers and consumers get ready for the ban and transition arrangements. The campaign will include advertising, direct mail, training materials and signage.”

Statement Ends/ 27 October 2010

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