

Consultation Feedback

RC

Ross Cullen [REDACTED]

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Plastic Bag Ban ▾

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I've just finished attending one of the Plastic Bag workshops held at the City of Stirling.

The DWER and Boomerang Alliance representatives did a great job hosting the workshop and summarising the current plastic bag proposal and encouraging feedback from the community.

As someone who has worked in the waste sector for over 12 years both in the field of composting and waste consulting, I wanted to take the opportunity to prepare a more formal response in addition to the survey response. I will endeavour to keep this as brief as possible but would be happy to discuss any points raised in greater detail if required.

My principal area of concern is regarding whether biodegradable or compostable bags should be excluded from the ban. My current views are summarised below:

- I agree with the Governments current position to adopt Option 2 (Statewide Ban) in place of any of the other options.
- I believe that increased microns as part of the ban may assist in retailers bypassing the ban and simply offer compliant alternatives.
- I believe that "degradable" bags should be included in the ban. My view is that these types of bags present an even greater risk to the environment and contamination of organic waste streams.
- While I note that Litter reduction is very important and I applaud both the proposed plastic bag ban and CDS legislation in addressing this, I think the net of influence of this ban should be cast even further. The Waste Authority has been actively promoting the adoption of a 3rd organics bin by WA LGA's. This 3rd bin provides LGAs with the opportunity to provides its residents either a Green Organics (GO) collection service or to expand this and include Food Organics (FO) creating a FOGO kerbside service. The adoption of a three bin system utilising a 3rd bin for FOGO waste is considered current best practise. However, there are currently no FOGO services in operation in Perth Metropolitan area with the exception of the City of Melville who has only just recently begun trials. My principle concern with the proposed ban is related to what impact including biodegradable or compostable bags in the ban would have on a full FOGO service.

It is understood that in the example of Melville trials, residents have been freely provided with compostable bin liners free of charge for food caddy's used in meal preparation areas. This situation may not always be financially sustainable for LGAs across Perth in the long term, and therefore residents may need to supply their own liners for such caddy's. My concern is that this may result in residents utilising non-biodegradable/compostable bags in their place and thereby severely contaminating the FOGO stream. I have seen firsthand the effects of plastic bag contamination on compost and mulch products, and the effects are severe. In some instances if contamination is high enough, the recycling of this product can be rendered pointless with no market willing to accept the product and thereby resulting in its disposal.

FOGO system focusing on the inclusion/exclusion of biodegradable/compostable bags. Therefore, my above concern may very well be unwarranted. However, all I ask is that the impact of the plastic bag ban on a FOGO system be fully considered as I did not read/hear much evidence to suggest this had been addressed. It is well documented that Australia suffers from poor quality soils and by damaging the opportunity for high quality organic products to return to the soil as closed loop system would be a severe loss to the environment and the State potentially of a greater order than a reduction in litter.

I look forward to the outcome of the consultation process and welcome the introduction of the plastic ban in the future.

Kind Regards,

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Senior Waste Management Consultant

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