

# What will we do without plastic bags?

February 19 2018, by Kirsten Flint

---



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Many will welcome the government's mid-year ban on single-use plastic bags, but how do we transition? And what do we transition to?

As of 1 July 2018, the [WA Government will ban](#) the use of lightweight single-use [plastic](#) bags.

Which is great. But what are we going to do without them?

Don't get me wrong, I won't miss them. For many of us, taking [reusable bags](#) to the shops is second nature. But many others Aussies are reliant on them—why else would they have stuck around so long?

Western Australians used approximately [360 million lightweight plastic bags in 2017](#). That's 140 bags per person per year, each of them used for a measly average of 12 minutes.

An estimated 5 million bags end up as litter in WA each year.

## **SACK THE BAG**

The plastic bag is one of the most palpable symptoms of mankind's impact on the planet.

Whereas climate change's insidiousness makes it invisible to some, it is difficult to miss the bags swilling around in our oceans, being pulled out of dead marine organisms and clogging up our landfills.

Professor Andrew Holmes from the University of Melbourne said, "The [plastic waste](#) in the oceans is disastrous for marine and birdlife," when he spoke to the [ABC. 90% of all seabirds have ingested plastic](#), which blocks up their digestive system, breaks open their guts and leaches chemicals into their blood.

It's not that we're not aware of the problem. In a survey, [95% of West Aussie respondents](#) were concerned about the impacts of plastics on waterways, oceans, wildlife and landfill sites. Now, the government is

asking us to voice these concerns—as well as any questions or suggestions we may have.

## HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE WAY FORWARD

Do you have ideas on how we can help consumers and retailers implement the new policy? The government and [the Boomerang Alliance](#) would love to hear from you. What resources do you want made available? Do you want support or training kits? Want to know how the government will handle adverse knock-on effects?

[The discussion paper](#) on the implementation of the ban is available for public comment until 9 March. The [government](#) is inviting public submissions via an [online survey](#) or written submissions.

Environment Minister Stephen Dawson says,

The policy change comes after extensive and intensive [pressure from our communities](#) and is proof that we can shape the way our world works. But the work to save our planet is not done yet, so if you have an opinion or idea, make sure it gets heard.

This article first appeared on [Particle](#), a science news website based at Scitech, Perth, Australia. Read the [original article](#).

Provided by Particle

Citation: What will we do without plastic bags? (2018, February 19) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-02-plastic-bags.html>

|  |
|--|
| <p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p> |
|--|