
Choose To Reuse & Say No to Plastic Bags



Plastic Bag Usage:

- Billions of plastic carry bags are distributed in Australia every year¹.
- The average plastic bag is used for just 12 minutes before it is discarded².

The Problems With Plastic:

- Plastic bags blow out of bins and landfill, block stormwater drains, and entrap wildlife. Marine wildlife choke on them, become entangled, and starve after mistakenly ingesting them as they give a false feeling of fullness³.
- Plastic takes up to 1000 years to break-down². It isn't biodegradable and therefore doesn't disintegrate into organic substances. This means that it never fully goes away. It just breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces until tiny plastic particles remain³.
 - Sea creatures eat these plastics. So if you eat seafood, you are consuming the many nasty chemicals in this plastic³.
 - Trapped plastic accumulates in the calm waters within circular ocean currents (gyres) forming ocean garbage patches likened to 'soups' of plastic³.
 - Accumulated surface plastic blocks sunlight reaching plankton & algae deeper down, which has implications for the animals which depend on it for feeding³.
- While plastic bags are considered a free commodity, they are also an expense for retailers. This cost is transferred to shoppers, as the price of goods is raised to compensate for the business expense.

The good news is that 81% of Australians now use plastic bag alternatives (such as reusable bags) because they care about the environment⁴.

If you value clean streets, beaches and oceans, do your bit and say:

No to Plastic Bags!

The Alternatives

Life cycle analysis suggests that **reusable shopping bags** have a much lower impact on the environment than limited-use plastic bags⁵.

Limited-Use Plastic Bags		Reusable Shopping Bag
X	X	✓
		

Give preference to reusable bags made from pre-used or recycled materials, and bags that are biodegradable or recyclable.



ReChusable (2013)⁶

If you value clean streets, beaches and oceans, do your bit -

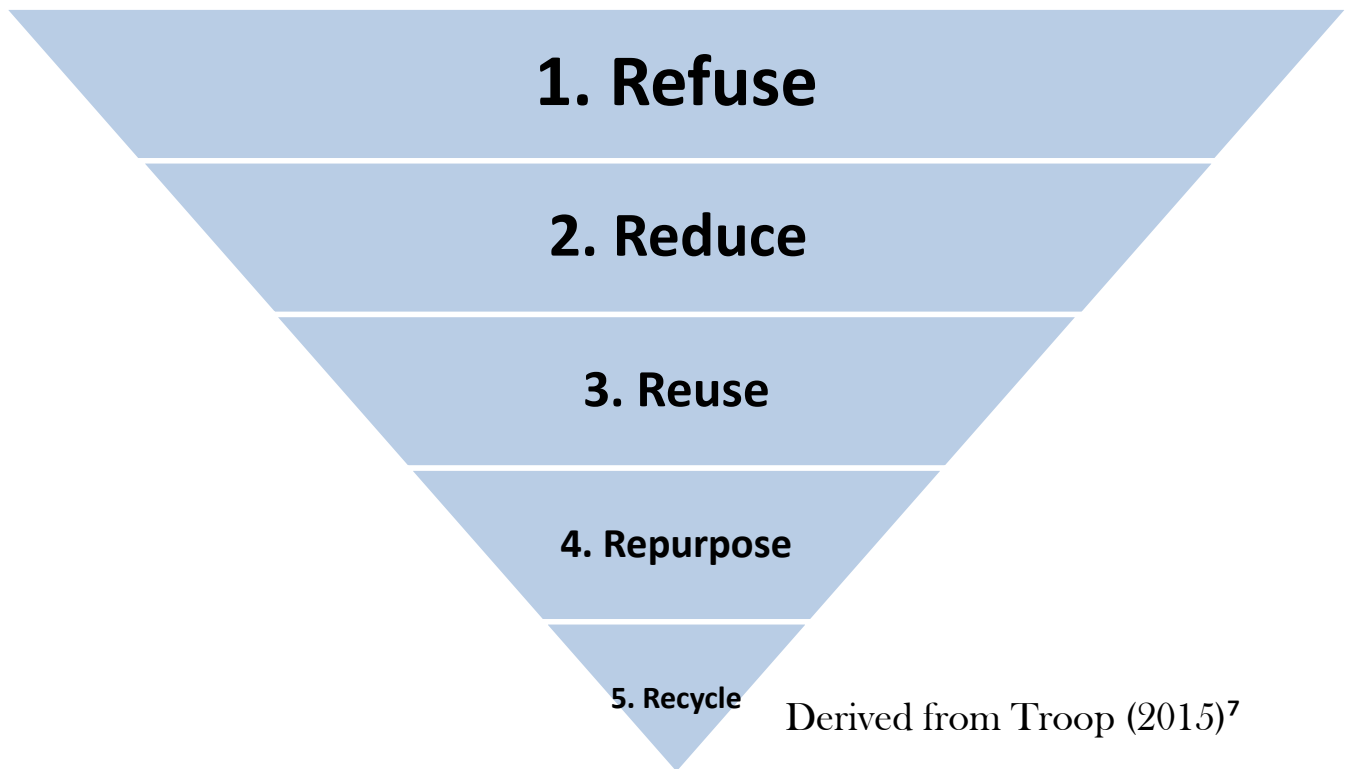
Choose To Reuse!

Plastic Bag Free Tips

Steps(order changed):

1. Make or purchase some reusable bags.
2. Keep reusable bags in a visible place, such as by the front door so you don't forget them.
3. Keep reusable bags in your car boot or daypack ready for those unplanned trips to the shops.
4. Keep reusable barrier bags or bread bags / other packaging inside each of your reusable bags, so you don't find yourself acquiring more barrier bags for your vegetables.
5. Place fruit and vegetables loose in your reusable shopping bags wherever possible.
6. If you forget your reusable bag, use a box. Bulk purchases of goods are often transported to stores in boxes, so they are usually available. Ask one of the shelf-filler staff if you can't find one.
7. Have your reusable bags out ready and visible at the check-out to so that your goods don't automatically get put in a plastic bag.
8. If you just buy one or two items, carry them bag free.
9. Use old newspaper, bread, cereal or chip bags, or other suitable packaging to line your bin, wherever possible.
10. Take any plastic bags you are not likely to reuse to a REDcycle softplastics recycling bin.
 - They are located outside some Coles and Woolworths stores, and you don't have to be a customer to use them.
 - To find a plastic bag recycling location near you, go to RecyclingNearYou.com.au.
11. Encourage friends and family to carry and use reusable bags.
12. Be guided by the Waste Minimisation Hierarchy.

Waste Minimisation Hierarchy



1. Refuse

- Many resources go into the production of products, so if you can, don't buy it.

2. Reduce

- Buy less new things, especially items that are packaged or need to be disposed of after use.

3. Reuse

- Choose items that can be re-used multiple times over ones that can only be used a few times.
- Reuse items as much as possible before replacing them.
- Choose to repair rather than replace, wherever possible.

4. Repurpose

- Make unwanted or broken items into new usable things.

5. Recycle

- Recycling requires a lot of energy and water, but keeps things out of landfill and the litter stream. So if you can't reuse or repurpose it, recycle it!
- For more information go to RecyclingNearYou.com.au or download the Sustain Me app.

Plastic Bag Free FAQ's

What is a reusable bag, and what are its benefits?

Reusable bags:

- are designed to be used many times over.
- are stronger and more durable than limited-use plastic bags.
- can hold more goods than a limited-use plastic bag.
- include bags made from jute, hemp, cotton, recycled PET and non-woven polypropylene ('green bags').

How do I extend the life of my reusable bag?

- If you accumulate more reusable bags than you need, don't throw them out.
 - Use them to store other things in, give them to others to use or donate them to your local op shop.
- Clean your reusable bag rather than throw it out when it gets dirty.
- Repair rather than replace your reusable bag, wherever possible.
- Be sure to dispose of your reusable bag appropriately, at the end of its life.
 - Non-woven polypropylene 'green' bags can be recycled at REDcycle soft plastics recycling collection points outside participating Coles and Woolworths stores (you don't have to be a customer to use them).
 - To find a soft plastics recycling collection point near you, go to RecyclingNearYou.com.au.

What's a limited-use plastic bag?

- Limited-use plastic bags include:
 - Lightweight High Density Polyethylene (HDPE) Plastic Bags <35 microns thick, such as those distributed in many supermarkets.
 - plastic bags ≥ 35 microns in thickness, made of low density polyethylene (LDPE), typically distributed by department stores.
- Limited-use plastic bags are made from ethylene (a by-product of oil or gas refining), and some include contents from recycled industrial waste sources¹. However despite this, life cycle analysis indicate that they have a much higher overall environmental impact compared to reusable alternatives^{5, 8}.

What alternatives can I use as a bin-liner?

- Reduce the amount of waste you accumulate by:
 - avoiding packaging wherever possible.
 - choosing reusable or refillable items over those that are disposable.

- using a worm farm, Bokashi system or compost bin to reduce the amount of food scraps you need to dispose of to landfill. Indoor and outdoor systems are available (see <http://www.maribyrnongcommunity.net/#>).
- Maribyrnong City Council requires waste for landfill to be bagged, but there are no bag type requirements:
 - Enclose dry waste for landfill in old newspaper (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfEX85V9n8w>).
 - Enclose wet waste for landfill in pre-used bread, cereal or chip bags, or other suitable packaging.
 - Give preference to compostable biodegradable bags over regular plastic bags.
- Not all council's require the use of a bin liner. If your council area permits it, use no liner!

What alternatives can I use for picking up my dog's poo?

Picking up after your pooch is very important as dog poo from the street ends up in waterways and contributes to E.Coli pollution⁹. Plastic bags are commonly used for picking up dog poo. However there are alternatives that work just as well:

- Use a pooper scooper or newspaper to directly transfer your dog's poo into your compost bin or in-ground Bokashi system. For circumstances where this is inappropriate, use a compostable biodegradable bag that meets the AS 5810 standard for home compostable biodegradable plastics before transferring the poo into your compost bin.
 - Compost from dog poo can only be used on non-edible gardens.
- Use packaging to collect your dog's poo, such as bread or chip bags, dog food bags or pasta bags.
- Give preference to compostable biodegradable bags over regular plastic bags.

What can I use for my fruit & vegetables?

- Alternatives include:
 - reusable barrier bags, such as those available from Boomerang Bags, Onya, ReChusable or The Fregie Sack.
 - bread bags, breakfast cereal packaging and other plastic packaging.
- Pre-used fruit and vegetable barrier bags are better than new ones.

What about compostable, biodegradable and degradable plastic bags?

- Compostable plastic bags (biodegradable)
 - There are Australian standards for commercial (AS 4736-2006) and home (AS 5810) compostable biodegradable plastics. These standards set out the

minimum requirements for how quickly and completely they break down in these settings¹⁰.

- These bags require water, heat and bacteria to break down. If disposed of in landfill, full degradation is unlikely⁸.
- Not all biodegradable plastic bags are compostable, and some contain non-biodegradable contaminants⁵.
- Degradable plastic bags can't be composted, and their full impact once broken-down is not yet known¹¹.
- All of these bags remain a risk to wildlife until they have broken down, and cannot be recycled.

Where else has a ban on plastic bags?

- South Australia, Northern Territory, the ACT and Tasmania have legislated bans on the distribution of single-use lightweight plastic bags at the point of sale¹².
- Bangladesh banned the distribution of single-use lightweight plastic bags in 2002. Since then several countries in Africa, the Asia Pacific, Europe, the Middle East and the Americas, and several states in the USA have also either banned or put a levy on them².
- In Victoria, there are several voluntary community plastic bag bans (including Anglesea and Port Fairy), and plastic bag free events (such as the Melbourne Farmers Markets).

Levy vs Ban - What Works?

- Charging for plastic bags can be effective in reducing their consumption, however the results are difficult to maintain.
 - There tends to be a significant initial drop in plastic bags usage when a charge is introduced. However over time consumption can increase, sometimes to above what it was before the charge was introduced. Progressive charge increases can help, but the long-term effects of this have not yet been established².
 - Charging for a plastic bag can make some people feel better about using them, and result in increased use¹³.
- Banning plastic bags is more effective in reducing their distribution, consumption and presence in the waste stream over the long-term.
 - Plastic Bag bans have been associated with increases in bin liner sales, however this increase tends to be minimal compared to the plastic bag reductions made^{12, 14}.

- The bans in other states and territories in Australia have followed 4-5month transition period^{12/15/16}.

How do I support the campaign for a Victoria-Wide Ban on Limited-Use Plastic Bags?

- Sign the petition.
- Choose to reuse and say no to limited-use plastic bags.
- Volunteer!
 - To get involved, please contact Plastic Bag Free Yarraville Village on plasticbagfreeyv@gmail.com or Ph: 0406 894 282. We are also working closely with Plastic Bag Free Victoria, who can be contacted on info@plasticbagfreevictoria.org.au.

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