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## **Plastic Bag Policy**

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Master Grocers Australia and Timber Merchants Australia (MGA TMA) is an association of family enterprises and privately-owned businesses who operate independent supermarkets, liquor stores, hardware outlets and timber supplies, who are committed to supporting each other and promoting the interests of the independent retail supermarket, liquor, hardware and timber industries.

MGA TMA is a high performing organisation, with a team of professional staff who are dedicated and committed to assisting the members in all aspects of their businesses. We strongly believe in promoting the interests of our members through advocating on their behalf with Federal and State Governments and other administrative organisations and associations, with the objective of achieving outcomes that contribute to the sustainability and success of their businesses.

MGA TMA has developed a series of policies on specific topics that represent the views of our organisation and that affect the livelihood and future growth of our members businesses. Each policy is based on the principles of fairness for employers, employees and the community.

## **Principles**

MGA TMA will consider any proposed lightweight plastic shopping bag ban in the light of the following principles:

- MGA TMA strongly supports the objective of reducing litter and increasing recycling, however, MGA TMA will oppose the introduction of the ban on plastic bags if this initiative increases red tape and cost burdens on independent retailers
- MGA TMA supports the use of a ban where it is necessary and is opposed to banning plastic shopping bags that imposes an unjustified, burdensome expense on small businesses;
- MGA TMA supports the need to maintain fairness for all parties should a complete ban on plastic bags be implemented across the Nation;
- MGA TMA strongly supports the avoidance of any adverse impact on the average cost of grocery shopping that may result from the imposition of any legislation regarding the ban on lightweight plastic bags.

## Objectives

The objectives of this policy are as follows:

- To ensure that our members are unhindered in their ability to operate their businesses profitably in the event of a complete ban on lightweight plastic bags;
- To protect our members against any unnecessary costs implications resulting from the introduction of the ban;
- To ensure that our members are not excessively penalised against proposed penalties should a retailer provide a banned plastic shopping bag to a person to carry goods;
- To be made fully aware of all the reasons for any further legislative action so as to ensure transparency for all interested parties.

## MGA TMA Position – Plastic Bag Bans

- MGA TMA strongly supports the objective of reducing litter and increasing recycling. Therefore, MGA TMA is in full support of actions that reduces rubbish going to landfill or ending up in the environment.
- MGA TMA regards the cost of implementing a plastic bag ban justifiable if it does not result in potentially unintended consequences.
  - Namely, the increased costs for providing training to employees in relation to the ban and how to deal with consumer complaints or queries and displaying notices explaining to consumers why the ban is in place;
  - Identifying, acquiring and offering alternative permissible bags, boxes or other methods to carry or deliver purchases;
  - Implementing extra processes on an ongoing basis to ensure compliance with legislation that would result in onerous administrative requirements and serious financial hardships for smaller retailers, particularly in Australia’s highly concentrated marketplace, one that is dominated by larger retailers such as Woolworths and Coles.
- The additional costs and administrative red tape issues involved in implementing a ban would negatively affect the viability of smaller retailers and the interests of the local communities in which these independent retailers trade.
- MGA TMA opposes any plastic bag ban based on legitimate justifications including,

- Proposed penalties should a retailer provide a banned plastic shopping bag to a person to carry goods is excessive;
- the unintended consequences of these costs,
- the adverse effects on an average household grocery basket, at a time when cost of living pressures is rising significantly, especially in rural and remote areas of the country.

These factors combine to make a plastic bag ban unjustifiable.

Jos de Bruin



CEO

Master Grocers Australia