



FAQs when speaking to people

In spreading the word about the campaign, you may meet people who are sceptical of banning single-use plastic bags. Talking to people with different opinions, or who may not know much about the issue, is a normal part of activism. It's also a great opportunity to get the person to think about the issue differently or even change their mind and turn them into a supporter.

Here are some common questions and answers to help you address these objections. If something is missing please contact either Sam, Ben or Ruby and we can help answer them.

What's the problem with plastic bags?

Scientists estimate that around [8 million tonnes](#) of plastic is ending up in the ocean each year. 30% of the world's turtles and 90% of seabirds have ingested plastic debris. By 2050, 99% of the world's seabird species will be accidentally eating plastic (CSIRO).

Australians use around 4 billion plastic bags every year - that's a whopping 10 million or so each day. Clean Up Australia estimates that around 50 million of these end up as litter and make their way into our waterways and ocean.

What are we calling for?

Environmental groups are, calling for a ban on bags up to 70 microns thick - including degradable and biodegradable bags, we support a transition and education program and urge action by NSW, QLD, Vic and WA to introduce a ban. A detailed position (in line with the Boomerang Alliance) can be found [here](#).

An easy and immediate option is to introduce a ban (including on degradable/biodegradable bags) similar to SA (up to 35 microns thick). This allows us to draw on the experience of SA. An expert panel could be established to examine other problematic plastics for future consideration.

Doesn't banning single-use bags just increase the use of biodegradable bags, which are worse for the environment?

The plastic bag bans in South Australia, Tasmania and the territories were a big victory for people power, although they could be stronger. Biodegradable bags break down faster than





non-biodegradable bags, creating smaller pieces of plastic that do more harm. A government committed to stopping the impacts of plastic bag pollution would ban all plastic bags.

Is there any evidence that marine life is better off since bans have been in place in the other states/territories?

It's a no-brainer that reducing the amount of plastic entering the ocean will reduce the impact on marine life. If there's less of it in the ocean, there's less plastic available to eat for marine animals.

A [recent study](#) (2015) of industrial practices in Europe found that improved management of plastic led to a clear reduction in the number of plastic items found in seabirds in the North Sea within a few decades. This is encouraging, as it suggests not only that the solutions are effective, but also that they work in a relatively short time.

According to the Queensland Government's EHP website, littered plastic bags cost Queenslanders over \$4 million a year in clean-up costs and take thousands of years to break down.

What will I put my rubbish in if the government bans plastic bags?

The plastic bag bans in other states and territories did not ban bin liners. The main cause of the plastic bag problem is the supermarkets showering us with free single-use plastic bags. Together we can end this destructive practice.

The main issue around garbage and bin liners is that they end up in landfill, which of course we don't want. We would absolutely suggest that people use compostable alternatives to plastic bin liners, like potato or corn starch bags, or more creative alternatives like old newspapers to line their bins - or just don't use liners and take your bin out more frequently. Better still, you can reduce your landfill waste by composting food scraps and recycling recyclables.

Doesn't banning single use plastic bags increase bin liner waste?

Some studies have suggested that 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.





Aren't you worried about the backlash from a public that doesn't want green lifestyles forced onto them?

In the same way that nobody complains about recycling anymore, [public polling](#) in South Australia shortly after the introduction of the bag ban showed that more than three quarters of the public were highly supportive of the ban. Plastic pollution affects all of us. It's not just a problem for people who want to live an environmentally friendly lifestyle.

Aren't green bags more resource-intensive and damaging than plastic bags?

[Research has consistently shown](#) that on almost every measure, green bags have a much lower environmental impact than single-use plastic bags. This is because the increase in green bags is far outweighed by the reduction in plastic bag use.

What is the government's position on plastic bags?

The plastic bag bans by state and territory governments have created momentum for more bans around the country. However, the federal government has taken some of the wind out of our sails by pretending that state and territory ministers need to agree to a "nationally consistent approach" before more plastic bags get banned. This means more studies, more reviews, more processes and more delay in banning plastic bags. There have been too many processes and plenty of studies. It's now time to ban plastic bags in each state and territory.

Why are you so hostile to more research on plastic bags? Isn't research a good thing?

We support research, and we know there are already mountains of research to show the unnecessary harm that plastic bags cause. The community is ready for a ban on plastic bags. Of course we can continue researching after the ban has come into place. The point, though, is not to observe how bad the problem is, but to fix it. We already know plastic bags are having a huge impact on the environment - it's time for action, not more talk.





I thought I heard that the federal government was already addressing this problem?

The federal government is insisting that the states and territories need a “nationally consistent approach” to banning bags. This is code for more reviews, more process, more delays, and more plastic bags. Australia has never required all of the states and territories to adopt the same laws. State and territory governments have the power to reduce marine pollution by banning plastic bags now, without having to get the agreement of other states and territories. It is wrong to suggest that one state government should be able to effectively veto another state government’s laws to protect their environment.

