



# Media release

**From the Minister for Environment**

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Monday 17 July, 2006

## **FREE PLASTIC BAGS TO BE BANNED IN VICTORIA**

Free plastic bags will be banned in Victoria from 2009 in an effort to reduce landfill, protect wildlife and stem the wasteful use of resources.

The ban is expected to drastically reduce Victoria's current annual consumption of 1.1 billion plastic bags.

The ban on free plastic bags is an important part of the State Government's \$200 million Environmental Sustainability Action Statement, announced by Premier Steve Bracks today.

Environment Minister John Thwaites said legislation enabling a ban on plastic bags was an Australian first and a major step towards making our everyday lives more sustainable.

"This legislation will send a clear message that these bags come at an environmental price that we can no longer ignore," Mr Thwaites said.

"About 10 million of these bags become rubbish that enters our waterways, threatens marine life and damages property and machinery.

"Non-biodegradable plastic bags kill substantial numbers of whales, seals, turtles and other marine wildlife and can take up to 1000 years to break down in the environment.

"While Victorians are to be congratulated for using 800 million fewer plastic bags in the last four years, we need to go one step further.

"A 10 cent fee for plastic bags introduced by Bunnings has seen bag use cut by 99 per cent – we would like to see the same impact across the State."

Retailers who wish to give out plastic bags must charge a minimum of 10 cent for each bag. Appropriate exemptions for fresh produce, biodegradable bags, retailers with an accredited phase-out plan and small retailers are being considered.

Legislation providing Government with the power to ban plastic bags will be introduced to Parliament this month.

State, Territory and the Commonwealth Environment Ministers have made a commitment to phase out single use, lightweight plastic shopping bags by the end of 2008.

Victoria's legislation will come into effect on January 1, 2009, if bags aren't phased out through voluntary measures by then.

"Getting rid of single use plastic bags is one way that we can make Victoria a Sustainable State and deliver a healthy future and a healthy environment to future generations."

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