



## **The Queensland Government will enforce a state-wide ban on single-use plastic bags from 1 July 2018.**

The Queensland Government has passed the **Waste Reduction & Recycling Amendment Bill 2017** which will forbid retailers from providing or selling lightweight plastic bags (known as single-use singlet bags) from **1 July 2018**.

This ban will affect all retailers that currently use some form of lightweight plastic bag – from grocery stores to fashion boutiques, from convenience stores to fast food outlets.

The National Retail Association (NRA) has partnered with the Queensland Government to help retailers navigate the new compliance issues, find alternative bag solutions and manage customer sentiment to ultimately minimise negative impacts on your business.

## **ABOUT THE BAN**

### **WHAT BAGS ARE BANNED?**

The Queensland Government's ban will apply to all lightweight singlet-style plastic bags less than 35 microns thick, including biodegradable and degradable bags.

### **WHAT BAGS ARE ALLOWED?**

The ban will not apply to the following bags:

- barrier bags without handles (typically used for fruit and vegetables)
- heavier-weight plastic bags (such as those used by department stores)
- bags that are integral to a product's packaging (such as a bread bag)
- fabric and 'green' bags (often used at supermarkets)
- paper or cardboard bags (often used in food outlets, pharmacies and convenience stores)
- kitchen tidy or bin liner bags.

### **WHY ARE BIODEGRADABLE BAGS BANNED?**

While there has been considerable research into biodegradable plastics, studies suggest that biodegradable plastic bags do not break down any faster when ingested than a 'normal' petrochemical plastic bag and therefore may have the same impact on marine life and plastic pollution.

### **WHEN DOES THE BAN COME INTO EFFECT?**

After extensive consultation with the retail industry, environment groups and other stakeholders over the past three years, the Queensland plastic bag ban will come into effect on 1 July 2018. Retailers will not be allowed to provide any banned bags from this date and fines will apply from this date.

### **WHAT ARE THE PENALTIES FOR NOT COMPLYING?**

To ensure that all retailers are on an even playing field in regards to the ban, and that real change is accomplished, fines will apply after 1 July 2018 and could be over \$6000 per offence. In addition, retailers who ignore the bag ban may suffer consumer boycotts or media criticism.



## MANAGING THE BAN

The Queensland bag ban will affect all retailers who currently use lightweight, single-use plastic bags, including HDPE plastic, biodegradable, compostable, and degradable bags. If you currently use banned bags, you will need to plan, prepare and make changes over the next few months.

## 5 KEY STEPS TO MANAGE THE BAN

### 1. UNDERSTAND THE BAN

Queensland retailers will need to weigh up alternative bag options, brief their teams, educate customers and potentially change operational processes to manage the transition smoothly and avoid issues such as unused bag stock or customer complaints. Retailers of all sizes and types are encouraged to attend one of the **free NRA Workshops** being held across the state between July and December 2017.

### 2. CONSIDER OPTIONS & MAKE DECISIONS

Many retailers have been preparing to replace single-use plastic bags over the past ten years. Large retailers such as Bunnings, Aldi, IKEA and Australia Post have already replaced lightweight plastic bags with reusable alternatives. Recently, Coles and Woolworths announced they will cease using lightweight plastic bags nationwide from 1 July 2018.

Business owners and senior managers will need to weigh up the options available and make the decisions based on your business model and consumer base.

The **QLD Bag Ban website** provides detailed advice and information to assist retailers with answering key questions such as:

- Do I need to provide a bag?
- What alternatives are best for my business?
- Should I charge customers for bags?
- What business processes will need to change?
- What are other retailers doing in my category?

### 3. PREPARE YOUR TEAM

A critical element of managing the ban in your business will be to prepare and train your team, particularly those who have regular contact with customers, such as checkout operators and customer service staff.

Depending on the alternatives you choose to offer, you may also need to consider changes to packing processes, point-of-sale areas and displays, as well as workplace health and safety issues such as packing weights and manual handling. Access the free training kits and resources on the **QLD Bag Ban website**.

### 4. INFORM YOUR CUSTOMERS

The Queensland Government will run a large-scale educational campaign from late 2017 to educate and prepare customers for the impending ban, however retailers will need to be prepared to handle customer questions and objections. Access the free signage and displays on the **QLD Bag Ban website**.

### 5. MANAGE THE TRANSITION

When the ban comes into effect on 1 July 2018, retailers will no longer be able to offer single use plastic bags. Retailers are encouraged to access assistance and advice from the NRA including the free resources and training kits available on the **QLD Bag Ban website** as well as the **QLD Bag Ban Hotline** (1800 RETAIL).