



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 lightweight plastic bags (known as single-use singlet bags) to customers from **1 July 2018**. The full legislation can be found here: <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/asmade/act-2017-031>

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.

MANUFACTURERS, WHOLESALERS & RESELLERS

If you currently sell lightweight, single-use plastic bags to retailers with stores in Queensland (or the other four jurisdictions in Australia with bag bans in place), you will need to plan, prepare and make changes over the next few months.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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.

Important: Other jurisdictions with bag bans in place may allow biodegradable or compostable bags. These exclusions do not apply in the Queensland legislation.

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.



RETAILER TRANSITION PROGRAM

KEY FACTS FOR SUPPLIERS

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 from 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.

WHAT ARE THE PENALTIES FOR SUPPLIERS THAT DON'T COMPLY?

The Queensland legislation forbids any person from providing false or misleading information about a banned bag ([see Section 99E](#)). This part of the legislation might also be used to prosecute a supplier for failing to provide information on a bag's thickness or its suitability to be used in a jurisdiction where a bag ban applies. Fines of over \$6000 per offence may apply and a supplier's client relationships and reputation could be adversely affected.

CAN RETAILERS CHARGE CONSUMERS FOR BAGS?

A retailer cannot provide a banned bag to a customer whether free or charged, but they may charge for alternative bags if they choose. Research indicates that consumers are increasingly willing to pay a small fee for a reusable bag varying from approximately 15 cents for a heavyweight plastic reusable bag to several dollars for cloth bags. Consumers are less willing to pay for lightweight plastic bags that appear to be single-use, even if they are more than 35 microns.

OUR PLASTIC BAGS ARE 35 MICRONS THICK, ARE WE AT RISK?

The current legislation bans all plastic bags, including biodegradable and compostable bags, less than 35 microns thick.

However, the NRA believes that retailers who use lightweight plastic bags close to 35 microns thick (and suppliers who promote them) are exposed to some risk as thickness can vary not only on one bag (eg. handle vs body) but per batch. It will be at the regulator's discretion to measure multiple bags as well as multiple spots on a bag. If a bag is deemed to be below 35 microns thick by regulators, the retailer will not be allowed to use these bags and fines may apply.

The legislation also provides scope for regulators to prescribe other bags to be banned bags in the future ([see Section 99B-1b](#)). The NRA believes that this poses some risk for retailers (and suppliers) who choose to use lightweight plastic bags that appear very similar to banned bags as consumers are likely to consider them 'single-use', regardless of whether "reusable" is printed on them. This could result in consumer backlash or retailers being stuck with large quantities of bags deemed banned at a later date.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH UNUSED STOCK?

All retailers and suppliers should try to reduce stocks of banned bags before 1 July 2018 as compensation will not be provided for unused stock. It is important to note that no grace period applies and fines can apply from 1 July 2018. If you are left with unused stock at the ban deadline, you can recycle soft plastics at a local recycler like [REDcycle](#) or you may be able to sell or exchange product with counterparts in jurisdictions where bag bans are not in place. Contact your local council to find out more about recycling facilities near you.

Retailers are encouraged to access further assistance and advice from the NRA available on the [QLD Bag Ban website \(www.qldbaggban.com.au\)](#) as well as via the [QLD Bag Ban Retailer Hotline \(1800 RETAIL\)](#).

Suppliers and manufacturers are encouraged to access the [Queensland Government's website: https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/pollution/management/waste/plastic-bags](#)