

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AMENDMENT (BANNING PLASTIC BAGS, PACKAGING AND MICROBEADS)
BILL 2016

Submission from Staying-in-Portarlinton Inc. from President, Jenny Wills, on behalf of the SIP Inc. Executive Committee 20/10/2016.

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Staying-in-Portarlinton (SIP) Inc. is a positive ageing community group which aims to:

- *develop a network connecting and supporting older residents who live independently in the community,
- *strengthen Portarlinton as an age friendly, vibrant town that enables residents to live life to the fullest and to age in place

Principles such as respect, dignity, flexibility, community inclusion, self-fulfillment and cross generational links are important to SIP's goals, which it promotes through information, support, activities and advocacy.

SIP strongly supports the restrictions proposed in the Bill and in particular in relation to the supply and sale of plastic bags.

SIP since 2011 has advocated for the replacement of plastic shopping bags with reusable bags. Our ongoing campaigning on this issue commenced following a household survey by SIP in which 68% of respondents identified the environment as their key issue of concern.

Since that time SIP has undertaken a number of activities with the aim of reducing plastic bag pollution on our fragile coastal environment.

These activities have included:

- . surveying of retailers to gauge support for a plastic bag free Portarlinton - it is interesting to note that many retailers indicated support for a campaign; but felt obliged to supply plastic bags in response to customer demands
- . liaison with the Portarlinton primary school to design art work for a reusable bag for free distribution throughout the community and in doing so recruit young children to become champions for their environment
- .obtaining a grant from the Barwon Regional Waste Management Group for the production of reusable bags which SIP continues to distribute to retailers, residents and at community events

. screening the award winning American documentary, BAG IT, in 2011 in the township and also over the annual holiday period in the caravan park to inform and educate residents, visitors and holiday makers about the impacts of plastic pollution

. lobbying Woolworths in 2013 to request the ban of single-use plastic bags and the promotion of reusable bags in the new Portarlington store

In addition to these grass roots initiatives SIP has made representations to:

1. the City of Greater Geelong for a Geelong-wide ban on plastic shopping bags in response to the initiatives taken in citizens' groups in Portarlington and neighbouring communities such as Pt. Lonsdale, Barwon Heads and Ocean Grove where there is also concern about environmental degradation and detrimental impacts of plastic on sea birds and other marine life

2. the Member for Bellarine, the Hon. Lisa Neville MP, as our local member and then Minister for the Environment in support of a proposed national ban on single-use plastic bags by State Environmental Ministers. It is our understanding that Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland did not agree to a national ban; but SIP is now encouraged that the current Bill will result in Victoria achieving a State-wide ban.

CONCLUSION

SIP Inc. commends the State Government in taking legislative action to restrict the supply and sale of plastic bags in Victoria.

SIP's actions over many years around this important environmental issue indicate that information, education, and even the option of free reusable bags, have limited results and therefore the banning the supply of single-use bags by retailers is urgently needed to protect our environment.

Staying-in-Portarlington Inc. strongly supports the Bill and on behalf of our fragile coastal environment eagerly awaits the 2017 introduction of the retail restrictions on plastic bags as proposed by the Bill.