

## COMMUNIQUE

1 August, 2003

### PLASTIC BAGS

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Australia's Environment Ministers, meeting today as the Environment Protection and Heritage Council, agreed to accept a revised Code of Practice developed by the Australian Retailers Association on the management of plastic bags.

Ministers agreed to accept the Code as long as it includes:

- Baseline data on current levels of use and recycling will be provided by all signatories to the Code.
- A transparent auditing standard and process will be put in place.
- Regular reports (e.g. six monthly) on implementation of the Code will be made to the Ministers and be publicly available.
- Retailers would provide a transparent, fair market choice between light-weight single use carry bags and multiple-use bags.
- The Retailers Association would enlist the signatures of as many small independent retailers as possible.

If the Code as amended is not implemented and/or targets not reached, Ministers will again look at implementing mandatory measures. Work by the Council on the development of these measures will continue.

Ministers indicated their support for phasing out light weight single use carry bags containing HDPE within five years and agreed that the ARA be asked to enter into negotiations during the life of the Code to specify actions beyond 2005 to achieve this objective.

Legal advice will be sought on how retailers may provide information to customers on the true costs of single and multiple use bags. This information will allow customers to make an informed choice.

The Australian Retailers Association will be required to provide a revised version of the Code incorporating the additional matters specified by Ministers prior to the next meeting of the Council in October 2003.

For further details contact:

Mr Paul Bainton  
Director, Environmental Stewardship Team  
Department of Environment and Heritage  
(02) 6274 1870  
Email: paul.bainton@ea.gov.au