Alternatives to single-use plastic bags

Plastic bag free CASTLEMAINE

DEGRADABLE BAGS

Commonly but misleadingly labeled 'earth friendly'. They have an additive which increases the rate at which they degrade. They don't break 'down', they break 'up' and turn into tiny pieces of plastic that can be ingested by 'sea/wildlife and humans alike. See *https://www.choice.com.au/shopping/packaging-labelling-and-advertising/packaging/articles/biodegradable-plastic*

BIO-DEGRADABLE BAGS

As most compost-able bags end up in landfill they contribute to methane production and we do not recommend them unless there are no other options and they will definately be composted. In the right conditions, these plant based bags will break down within 12 months and cause problems for sea/wildlife in the interim. There is evidence to suggest that people are more likely to litter bio-degradable bags as they believe they will break down quickly – kind of like throwing the apple core out the car window. There are no restrictions on writing things like "biodegradable" on packaging. Australia has two standards relevant for biodegradable bags. So look for the certification – or dismiss it as a 'greenwash'. Bio-degradable bags labelled **Australian Standard number (AS 4736-2006)** will biodegrade in a commercial compost facility. Bio-degradable bags labelled **Australian Standard number (AS 5810-2010)** will biodegrade in a home compost bin – the best option.

Compostable

Home Compostable

THICKER PLASTIC BAGS

With lower than expected rates of re-use, these bags are resource intensive. They are often used as a replacement for the thinner bag or when there is a fee-for-purchase. They can be recycled, but usually aren't. The argument that they can be reused as bin liners does not stack up.

PAPER BAGS

There has been much research and debate on paper vs. plastic. To cut a long story short, paper, loses – using far more energy to produce. On the up side paper bags are

- bio-degradable, if composted
- can be easily recycled and
- do not create a problem for our marine wildlife – a big plus!

GREEN BAGS

These are made from woven plastic – some of it recycled. They rate quite well given that they are usually re-used many times. They can be recycled, but are not usually. However, they break up into smaller pieces, called micro-fibres, that cause serious problems for wildlife and marine life.

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CALICO BAGS

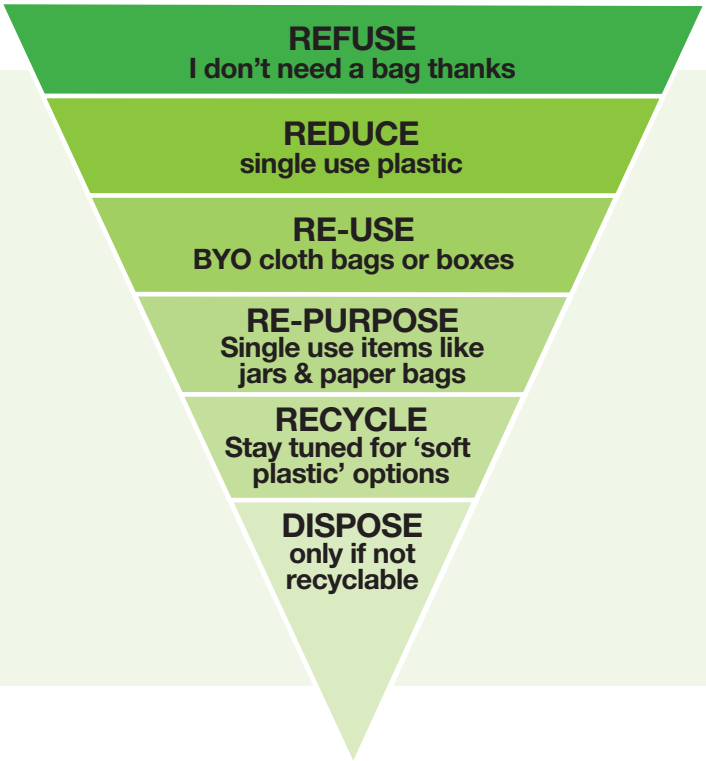
A good option, mostly because of their compost-ability, and, assuming they are used around 100 times they stack up OK. Most unbleached calico originates in Pakistan which increases its footprint. A lot of water is used in their production. The actual impact depends on which fabric they are made from. If they are made from 'waste' fabric (like the Boomerang Bags), this reduces their impact dramatically. Organic, unbleached fair trade cotton is preferred for its reduced 'footprint' but cost can be prohibitive.

BOOMERANG BAGS

A great option as they are made from 'waste' materials. On the down side, they are made with volunteer community labour and cannot (as yet) meet the demand for a plastic bag replacement, however – they are a fabulous support to a transition to 'plastic bag free', supporting shoppers who have forgotten their BYO bag.

NOT-PAPER BAGS

Bags that use 'alternative paper' such as unbleached sugar cane or bamboo rate better than 'paper' as they utilise a waste product – but they're not that easy to find.



BYO BAG!

The only option for safely replacing single-use plastic bags is to BYO...

- **Reusable shopping baskets**
- **Cardboard boxes**
- **Foldable shopping trolleys**
- **Reusable bags made from natural material like bamboo, cotton, calico or hemp.**
- **Paper bags sourced from recycled paper or other sustainable sources**

the hub FOUNDATION
Helping tackle climate change locally