



## PLASTIC BAG BAN

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### **Q1. What is a single-use plastic bag?**

Single-use plastic bags are used to carry goods and usually provided to customers at the point of sale. These are the thin printed or coloured plastic bags commonly used in our municipal markets, supermarkets, corner shops, service stations and restaurants and are intended to be used only once before they are thrown away or recycled.

The most common shopping bags are made of a type of plastic called polyethylene – or polythene – a tough, light, flexible, synthetic resin obtained by polymerizing ethylene.

#### **Q2. Why are single-use plastic bags bad?**

Plastic pollution or waste affects human health, animals and the environment. The UN Environment estimates that only 9 billion tonnes of plastics in the world is recycled. Single-use plastics take up to thousands of years to decompose, slowly breaking down into smaller pieces of plastic called microplastics. Harmful chemicals used to manufacture plastic gets transferred into the environment and contaminates soil and water bodies, eventually entering our food chain. The health of our oceans is also adversely affected by plastic litter, choking our marine life and killing corals.

#### **Q3. Why is it important to ban single-use plastic bags in Fiji?**

Plastic bag litter is found throughout our communities, strewn on the road-side, thrown into our water ways, or left on our beaches. Plastic bag litter diminishes the beauty of our islands which attracts thousands of tourists annually.

Fiji and other Pacific Island countries are custodians of the largest ocean in the world. The ban is our response to preserve ocean health which is in a serious decline due to marine pollution, rising sea temperature and climate change.

#### **Q4. Which plastic bag products will be banned?**

The Environment Management (Budget Amendment) Act 2019 bans plastic bags that are used as a carry bag and is made entirely or in part of polyethylene also referred to as 'PET' and is less than 50 microns in thickness and is used for the purpose of carrying or transporting of goods.

This ban does not apply to a plastic bags that are:

- a) an integral part of packaging for example plastic bags for sliced bread;
- b) used as garbage bags and bin liners; and
- c) above 50 microns in thickness.

#### **Q5. When will the ban come into effect and where will it apply?**

The ban comes into effect on 1 January, 2020.

Single-use plastic bags will no longer be used at:

- Supermarkets;
- Retail outlets (such as convenience store, drug store, smaller retail stores, service stations);
- Restaurants, food courts and outlets; and
- Municipal and roadside markets
- Or any commercial outlets

#### **Q7. What are the penalties for not complying with the ban?**

- A person who manufactures a plastic bag commits an offence and is liable upon conviction to a fine not exceeding \$500,000 or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 7 years or both.
- A person who—
  - a) Sells, supplies or distributes a single-use plastic bag to another person; or
  - b) Makes a plastic bag available to a customer for carrying goods purchased, or to be purchased, from a retailer, commits an offence and is liable upon conviction to a fine not exceeding \$150,000 or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 2 years or both.

#### **Q8. Will the plastic bag levy still apply?**

Yes. A plastic bag levy of 50 cents will apply for reusable plastic bags permitted by law. However, plastic bag avoidance is best and businesses and consumers are encouraged to use environment-friendly alternatives.

**Q9. What can I use instead of single-use plastic bags?**



Cloth Bag



Jute Bag



Paper Bag



Newspaper



Containers



Natural woven baskets



Cartons

## Helpful Tips

- Keep reusable bags in your car, at work, or carry them in your hand-bag
- After using your reusable bags, hang them by the door or keep them by your keys so you remember to take them with you
- If you forget to do any of the above either borrow or buy a new one, as it can be used again

### **Q10. How can I obtain more information on the single-use plastic bag ban?**

For more information on the plastic bag ban, contact the Ministry of Economy via e-mail: [plasticbagban@economy.gov.fj](mailto:plasticbagban@economy.gov.fj) or Mobile: 8986312

To report those who violate the plastic ban law, contact the Department of Environment via e-mail: [info6@govnet.gov.fj](mailto:info6@govnet.gov.fj) or the Department of Environment hotline number: 1520

**Join us to help keep Fiji plastic free!**