



PAC.NZ
Packaging Council of New Zealand Inc.

3rd May 2016

Chairperson

Local Government & Environment Committee

lge@parliament.govt.nz

Dear Chairperson

Petition of Rebecca Bird on behalf of Our Seas Our Future

Thank you for giving the Packaging Council (PAC.NZ) the opportunity to respond to this petition.

The purpose of PAC.NZ is to represent the packaging industry as a key sector in the New Zealand economy, one that improves the utility and safety of products and underpins producers and manufacturers efforts to 'add value' in an export-dependent economy. Independent analysis by KPMG puts the value of the New Zealand packaging industry at \$3.9 billion and Infometrics data shows that over five thousand businesses support 48,000 employees. The packaging industry in New Zealand is constantly innovating to create the features and benefits we demand from packaging such as improved functionality, customer preference, safety, design for dexterity challenges, portion control for health benefits and wastage prevention and enhanced environmental characteristics.

PAC.NZ are supportive of all efforts to reduce the *unnecessary* use of plastic bags and indeed all packaging. We readily support all voluntary and regulatory efforts to curtail the careless (if not illegal) discarding of used plastic bags and packaging such that waste materials enter the marine environment as litter.

PAC.NZ was a founding partner of the Make a Difference Campaign which reported an overall reduction of an estimated 157.4 million plastic shopping bags.

PAC.NZ is an active contributor to Auckland City Council's plastic bag working group, the objective of which is to investigate and develop plastic bag reduction initiatives. PAC.NZ has regularly encouraged Auckland Council and other territorial authorities on more than one occasion to utilise their powers of enforcement and prosecution where evidence of careless littering and other polluting behaviours contribute to the growing problem of plastic in the coastal / marine environment.

We would make the follow observations in regards to this particular petition:

- We would suggest that overseas examples of single-use plastic bag bans be translated into the NZ context to ensure that, if a ban were imposed, the desired outcome would be achieved. NZ has a comparatively small and geographically spread population which can mean a different outcome when measures adopted overseas are applied here.

- What consideration been given to the functionality and environmental footprint of alternatives to single use plastic bags if a regulatory ban successfully created a significant reduction use? For example there is widespread re-use and/or re-purposing of plastic shopping bags for uses such as bin liners, removal of pet waste and the like. Has it been established that a ban on a particular use for plastic bags will achieve an actual reduction and/or a better overall outcome when secondary use is considered?
- A ban is a blunt instrument which can drive perverse outcomes. We support retail initiatives which encourage the consumer to question whether a bag is necessary at the point of sale and to consider alternative actions.
- This petition is on behalf of Our Seas Our Future, suggesting that they are motivated by the need to reduce litter in the marine environment. We absolutely support enforcement of the Litter Act and any promotional / educational initiatives by appropriate authorities and organisations which communicate that litter is unacceptable social behaviour.
- The actions of our members and therefore the Council as a whole are subject to a number of statutory constraints including Commerce and Fair Trading related legislation. This expressly precludes price fixing and other anti-competitive and or misleading behaviours, notwithstanding the environmental merit of any illegal actions.

Conclusion

The Packaging Council remains to be convinced that further and additional regulatory intervention is needed. We welcome informed and constructive debate on all aspects of packaging in an effort to identify proportionate and cost effective solutions. We support initiating a constructive educational campaign and, where warranted, the use of existing regulatory powers under the Litter and Resource Management Act's to inform personal responsibility. It is our strong belief that these measures consistently applied and reinforced are the key to enduring solutions.

Yours sincerely



Harry Burkhardt

President