

Media release
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Behaviour Change Sector Group delighted to see ban on single use plastics as part of consultation

“Today’s announcement by Associate Minister for the Environment, Eugenie Sage, to ban seven single-use plastic items is an important step in addressing plastic pollution,” says Donna Peterson, the Chair of the WasteMINZ Behaviour Change Sector Group.

The items are plastic straws, plastic cotton-buds, drink stirrers, tableware, some single-use cups and lids, single-use produce bags and non-compostable produce stickers.

“Community groups and the hospitality sector have done a lot of important work in this area. Many cafes and bars now only offer straws on-demand and many more have switched to paper straws and don’t offer drink stirrers. However, about 75% of litter found in beach clean-ups is still single-use plastic with straws still the ninth highest offender of beach clean-up items,” Ms Peterson says.

“Asking people to say no to straws is all good and well, but this doesn’t stop one being included in your drink by hospitality staff, purely out of habit. At the moment it is the responsibility of consumers to remember to bring their reusable alternatives to plastic straws, produce bags and tableware and only a minority of people manage to do this. Phasing out these products will force change.”

The proposed phase-out of problematic plastics such as expanded polystyrene is also welcome. Even though they are less common, polystyrene coffee cups and takeaway containers are still on offer at some food outlets.

“It can be quite a shock for some people when they order their favourite takeaway and instead of it being wrapped in paper or in a recyclable plastic container it comes in a polystyrene container which can’t be recycled.”

Only one year ago single-use plastic shopping bags were phased out in Aotearoa and most people now remember to bring their reusable bag or pay to purchase new ones. The Behaviour Change Sector Group stresses the need for such mandatory measures to be implemented alongside educational campaigns.

“Change can be difficult for people but with 70% of New Zealanders being concerned about the build-up of plastic in our environment, most people are willing to accept changes that will help them to do the right thing - provided they understand the rationale behind the change and the positive environmental impact it will have,” Ms Peterson adds

The Behaviour Change Sector group encourages any New Zealander with concerns about plastic pollution to make a submission on this consultation, which is open from now until 4 November 2020.

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