

Plastic ban nearer but not in the bag



GATHERING FORCE: Campaigners Jon Dee, left, and Ben Kearney are pushing for Tasmania to ban plastic shopping bags. Picture: KIM EISZELE

BRIAN WARD

PLASTIC bag ban advocates Jon Dee and Ben Kearney are confident a ban in Tasmania will go ahead.

Managing director of lobby group Do Something Jon Dee said talks with Tasmania's major political parties yesterday showed positive signs the ban could be implemented.

"We were given excellent feedback from everyone we spoke with, and they all seem committed to the cause," Mr Dee said.

"The great thing was that they all seem quite willing to co-operate to make it happen," he said.

Mr Dee and Mr Kearney were behind the bag ban at Coles Bay in 2003.

The tourist destination was the first town in Australia to ban shops from giving or selling plastic bags.

At the time Mr Kearney owned a bakery at Coles Bay and worked with Mr Dee to implement the ban.

"Coles Bay has served as the standard for plastic bag bans, which have since been put in place in cities all over the world," Mr Kearney said.

Similar bans have already been implemented in South Australia and the Northern Territory will follow suit next July.

Mr Dee said a ban in Tasmania could have national implications.

"The State Government in Tasmania now has the opportunity to set an example for the Federal Government," he said.

Greens environment spokeswoman Cassie O'Connor has long been an advocate of the ban and urged Labor and the Liberals to get on board.

"Tasmania's recent appalling performance in Keep Australia Beautiful national littering index shows we need to get on top of cultural bad habits when it comes to managing waste."

"A good place to start is banning non-biodegradable plastic bags," Ms O'Connor said.

Before the state election in March Liberal

leader Will Hodgman pledged a ban on plastic bags within two years and last month the party pledged its continuing support for the plan.

Labor has been opposed to a ban on bags.

Environment Minister David O'Byrne yesterday said Labor was committed to reducing plastic waste in the state.

He said reducing use of plastic bags and packaging in general was a part of a long-term strategy.

Meanwhile, City Supermarket co-owner James Green was not too worried about the effect a ban on plastic bags would have on his business.

"I guess it all depends on how much an alternative would cost," he said.

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