

## Retailers & Gov't fail the test on plastic bags

### Retailers using at least 1 to 2 billion more bags every year

Government figures state that Australia's retailers use **3.9 billion** plastic check-out bags every year. However, new research shows that this is at least **1 to 2 billion bags** short of the real figure.

Woolworths have said they're using **1.5 billion** plastic bags every year. Figures obtained by the Sydney Morning Herald and Do Something suggest that Coles are also using more than **1 billion** plastic bags at the checkout. Other supermarkets combined appear to use a further **1 billion** plastic bags (full details at [www.smh.com.au](http://www.smh.com.au)).

Given retail sector claims that supermarket plastic bags account for only half the plastic bag use in Australia, the current Government figures underestimate the problem by **at least 1 to 2 billion plastic check-out bags** every single year.

"When it comes to the Government's promise to phase-out plastic bags, Peter Garrett and the Rudd Government have totally failed," says **Jon Dee**, the Founder of action group '**Do Something**' and a key driver behind the campaign to ban plastic check-out bags.

Since Labor came to power with the pledge to phase out plastic bags by the end of 2008, plastic bag use appears to have gone up. And now evidence has come to light which shows that retailers are using billions more plastic bags than the Government says they are.

Since the Howard Government began the voluntary phase-out of plastic bags in 2002, Australians have used **at least 35 billion plastic bags** that have ended up in landfill or the environment. Many of these bags will take hundreds of years to break down and if they end up in the environment, they can kill or injure the marine life which mistake them for food.

Dee and Do Something are calling on Peter Garrett and Kevin Rudd to do three things:

- 1) Undertake an inquiry to assess how many plastic bags are really being given away
- 2) Make major retailers publicly report on the amount of plastic bags that they use
- 3) Follow South Australia's lead and ban conventional plastic check-out bags

"These figures show that the voluntary approach to phasing out plastic bags has totally failed," says Dee. "If the State and Federal Governments can't sort out something simple like plastic bags, then how on earth are they going to handle other issues like climate change?"

**MEDIA INTERVIEWS:** Jon Dee is available for interview **from 5am** on 02 9519 8766