

Australians slash plastic bag use by 1.34 billion bags

But industry roundtable to be told “you can do a lot better”

New figures reveal that Australians have cut their plastic bag habit by **1.34 billion bags** a year. However, a Planet Ark report commissioned by the Australian Government shows that many non-supermarket retailers can do more to reduce plastic bag use.

“Despite this promising start, Australians are still using **5.58 billion** plastic check-out bags every year,” says Planet Ark Founder Jon Dee.

“Supermarkets have done well to get Australians using millions of green bags,” said Dee, “But too many fast food outlets, newsagents, pharmacies, liquor stores and other types of businesses are doing little or nothing to reduce plastic bag use,” he said.

Under the Australian Retailers Association *Code of Practice for the Management of Plastic Bags*, the ARA and the Environment Protection and Heritage Council have agreed to halve the use of HDPE plastic bags by the end of 2005. Planet Ark’s research reveals great disparities in how non-supermarket retailers are responding to this challenge.

At a plastic bags roundtable of industry and environment groups at Parliament House today, Planet Ark’s Dee will tell non-supermarket retailers that they are not doing enough to achieve this 50 per cent reduction target.

Of the 129 non-supermarket retailers surveyed in the study, **47 per cent** had not heard of the ARA’s target to cut plastic bag use by 50 per cent. Indeed, non-supermarket retailers have only reduced HDPE plastic bag usage by between **10-15 per cent**. By comparison, major supermarkets have achieved a **26.9 per cent** reduction.

The good news is that some stores surveyed by Planet Ark are achieving better results than supermarkets. By charging 10 cents for each plastic check-out bag, **Bunnings** and **IKEA** have cut their plastic bag use by up to **73 per cent** and **85 per cent** respectively. Other retailers like **Nando’s** have managed to ban plastic bags altogether. “These retailers are setting a positive example for others to follow,” said Dee.

**For interviews, please call Jon Dee from 5am on 0414 971 900.
Alternatively, call Stephen Duckitt on 0403-001-245.**

Jon Dee and Federal Environment Minister Ian Campbell will hold a media call at 9.40am at Parliament House in Canberra. Call Renae on 0418 568 434 for details.