Planet Ark backs Bob Carr call for plastic bag ban

Planet Ark's national campaign to ban plastic check-out bags got a boost yesterday when Premier Bob Carr called for a ban on plastic bags.

"Bob Carr is sending a shot across the bows of the retail sector to reduce their bag usage or face a plastic bag ban," says Jon Dee, the Founder of Planet Ark.

According to Federal Environment Minister Dr David Kemp, the retail sector has so far reduced their plastic bag usage by 210 million bags. With 6.9 billion bags being used in Australia every year, this represents a reduction of just over 3% - far short of the 25% plastic bag reduction target that needs to be reached by the end of this year.

"The retail sector’s voluntary attempt to reduce plastic bag usage is currently not working," said Dee. "If retailers as a whole cannot organise themselves to reduce their bag usage by 25% then they cannot say that Premier Carr has not warned them to the consequences."

Many retailers are yet to implement major reform to the way they hand out plastic bags at the checkout.

However, some retailers are setting a good example for others to follow. Coles have reduced their plastic check-out bag use by 12% and are set to reach the 25% target. Red Rooster have recently halved their usage of plastic bags. By introducing a 10 cent plastic bag levy, IKEA and Bunnings have reduced their bag usage by up to 85% and 90% respectively. ALDI does not give away free plastic bags.

Planet Ark initiated the idea of a plastic bag ban almost a year ago when it got the town of Coles Bay to ban plastic bags. Since then Planet Ark has helped other towns such as Kangaroo Valley, Mogo and Huskisson to do the same. "These communities have shown that Bob Carr’s call for a ban on plastic bags is more than achievable," said Dee.

To coincide with Bob Carr’s call, Leichhardt Council announced that they would be working with Planet Ark and the local community to ban plastic check-out bags in the Sydney suburb of Rozelle.

For interviews, please call Jon Dee on 0414 971 900 anytime.