Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Water and Environmental Regulation**

National**Retail** ASSOCIATION

New requirements for barrier bags

Plastic barrier bags used for unpackaged fruit, vegetables, nuts, confectionary, meat, seafood, and dairy products are being banned in WA. Compostable plastic alternatives are also required to meet new design standards. This change aims to reduce plastic waste and improve the compatibility of bags with processing systems.

BANNED

Banned from 1 September 2024

- non-compostable plastic produce bags supplied for loose fresh fruit or vegetables.

Banned from 1 October 2025

- plastic bags which do not meet the Design Standard used for loose fruit, vegetables, nuts or confectionary.

  Nuts and confectionery items can include raw, toasted or flavored nuts, sweets, lollies, granola clusters, chocolate covered foods, trail mixes, dried fruit yogurt bites and nougat.

Banned from 1 October 2026

- plastic bags which do not meet the Design Standard used for unpackaged meat, seafood or dairy products.

Important: Plastic shopping bags with handles used to carry goods from a business were banned in WA on 1 July 2022.

The ban does NOT apply to:

- Reusable fabric bags
- Plastic bread bags or bags used for loose baked goods, such as pastries or cookies
- Plastic bags or pouches used for non-food products (e.g. craft products)
- Bags used for goods that are pre-packaged *before* being placed on sale (e.g. pre-packaged bags or vacuum-sealed pouches)
- Bags sold on-shelf (e.g. freezer bags)
- Zip-lock or resealable plastic bags
- Certified compostable plastic barrier bags that comply with the Design Standard.

ALTERNATIVES

For loose fruit, vegetables, nuts or confectionary:

- Encourage customers to bring their own reusable bags or not use bags for small purchases.
- Consider offering caddies or baskets which customers can then leave at the checkout.
- If you need disposable alternatives, consider plastic-free options such as paper bags or boxes.
- Certified compostable plastic produce bags which meet the Design Standard requirements are also allowed.

For unpackaged meat, seafood or dairy:

- Encourage customers to bring their own clean, reusable containers where safe and appropriate.
- Consider plastic-free options, such as wrapping items in paper or packaging products in fibre-based containers.
- Certified compostable plastic barrier bags which meet the Design Standard requirements are also allowed.

Turn over for compostable plastic bag requirements

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Compostable plastic barrier bags

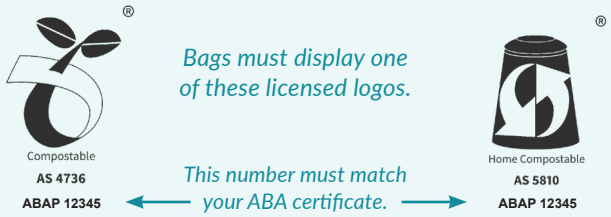
If you choose to supply a 'compostable' or 'biodegradable' plastic barrier bag, it must meet the following **mandatory requirements** under the Design Standard:

1. Be certified compostable to an Australian Standard:
   - *AS 4736-2006 Commercial Composting*, and/or
   - *AS 5810-2010 Home Composting*.

   The entire printed bag must be certified. The type of ink and rate of ink application must be included in the certification.

2. Be labelled on the bag with the relevant Australasian Bioplastics Association (ABA) certification logo and unique ABA certification number.

   TIP: The certification symbol and identification number should be clearly visible and in a high contrast colour.



3. Be clear or semi-transparent (not opaque). Untinted or green tinted bags are acceptable.

   TIP: Bags should be clear or semi-transparent so the shape and colour of the product inside the bag is clearly visible.

4. Have no handles.

   Remember: Plastic shopping bags with handles used to carry goods from a business were banned in WA on 1 July 2022.

5. Bags used for loose fresh fruit and vegetables must also have a minimum opening circumference of 74 centimetres.

   TIP: Opening circumference is taken from the manufacturer's product listing (manufacturing tolerances excluded).

Consider additional recommended features which can further assist in the safe use, reuse and/or composting of barrier bags. For example:

- 8 Litre volume is recommended to be more compatible with kitchen caddy bins.
- Green tinting or a thick green band printed across the bag is also recommended to help composters identify bags easily.
- Consider adding other labelling or information on the bags, such as how to use them safely and how to dispose of them.

These additional features are optional recommendations NOT mandatory requirements.

Tips to comply

First, consider plastic-free alternatives or whether you really need to supply barrier bags.

If you choose to supply compostable plastic barrier bags, contact your supplier and check that the bags are **compliant, safe** and **functional** for your products.

Compostable certification

Do your 'compostable' plastic bags have current, valid certification for one of the Australian Standards (AS 4736-2006 and/or AS 5810-2010)?

- Either Australian Standard is accepted, but international standards are not recognised.
- Make sure you see the official **Australasian Bioplastics Association** (ABA) certificate. Check that:
  - ✓ the description matches the printed product (not just the raw unprinted material)
  - ✓ the unique certification number is labelled on the product, and
  - ✓ the certificate is current.

- The certified manufacturer must be able to provide information on the type of ink used and rate of ink application upon government request.
- Visit the ABA website to check the certificate number is valid and current (as certificates must be renewed annually).
- If you are unsure about the certification, contact the ABA: **bioplastics.org.au**

Safety and suitability

Are your bags safe and functional for your products?

- Check that the bags have been specifically tested for your type of product. Example tests include chemical migration, bacterial testing, freezing, defrosting, and durability.
- This is especially important for foodstuffs such as wet raw meat, seafood and dairy, which can become hazardous if packaged improperly or if customers are unfamiliar with them.
- Do **not** assume that compostable plastic bags designed for vegetables are automatically suitable for other foods. Ensure you discuss your product needs with your supplier.

Read more tips by scanning the QR code below.

WA PLASTICS BAN
Business Engagement Program

Contact the National Retail Association for tips and advice.

For more information visit plasticsbanwa.com.au