

Butchers, delicatessens, cheese and seafood suppliers

October 2025



Background

In January 2025, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation confirmed that the scope of the existing ban on prescribed plastic barrier bags would be expanded from 1 October 2025 to include loose nuts and confectionery. Additionally, barrier bags used for unpackaged perishable fruit and vegetables would expand to include bags for unpackaged meat, seafood and dairy (collectively termed wet proteins).

From 1 October 2025, all retailers supplying prescribed barrier bags will need to use certified compostable barrier bags that comply with the <u>design standard</u>. This means that from this date, the design standard will apply to all barrier bags used to supply unpackaged fresh fruit and vegetables, loose nuts and confectionery.

The design standard will apply to barrier bags used by retailers of 'wet proteins', such as delis and butchers, from 1 October 2026.

These frequently asked questions are designed for butchers, delis and seafood suppliers. They should be read in conjunction with the <u>Barrier</u> bag factsheet that details the scope of the ban and outlines the requirements of the design standard.

Frequently asked questions

► What would be considered a wet protein?

The term wet protein encompasses a range of meat, seafood and deli items, including deli meats, raw and marinated meat, poultry, fish or seafood, as well as soft, hard and marinated cheeses.

► Why ban plastic barrier bags?

Each year, more than 70 million plastic barrier bags for produce alone are used across Western Australia. Most of these end up in landfills or are littered in the environment. These bags cannot be recycled through the yellow-lid kerbside recycling bin; instead, they are a resource lost to landfill or a contaminant of recycling streams or waterways.



Can non-certified plastic barrier bags continue to be used for pre-packaged wet proteins?

Yes. Plastic barrier bags, such as those made from conventional plastic or those that are not certified to Australian composting standards, used to package wet proteins in advance for display and sale throughout the day are outside the scope of this ban.

If you offer a range of pre-packaged goods in barrier bags, as well as offering packed-to-order selections of wet proteins, we encourage you to trial using certified compostable barrier bags to replace conventional plastic barrier bags. However, this is not required by regulation. Moving away from conventional plastic barrier bags could save time on training staff, avoid the need to order and monitor stock levels of two different barrier bag products, and reduce the amount of single-use conventional plastic being used.

Can a compliant compostable produce bag be used as a caddy liner for FOGO collection?

Compliant barrier bags displaying the ABA's Commercial Compostable (Seedling) or Home Compostable logo can be used for food waste in Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) collections. Households in local government areas that offer FOGO collection services can use these barrier bags for food scraps and to line their kitchen caddy.

The design standard was developed to ensure the compostable barrier bags can be used for collecting food waste and are identifiable to composting processors.

Will this ban impact my pre-packaged offerings or my use of plastic trays for raw meat and seafood?

No, the ban on plastic barrier bags will not require you to change how you package food items in advance of sale (i.e. pre-packed or pre-packed offerings). However, if you have a range of pre-packaged or pre-packed takeaway goods, we recommend checking that your current packaging solutions comply with the

1 September 2024 ban on takeaway food containers.

Clear plastic trays (such as those made from PET, HDPE and PP) can continue to be used for raw meat and seafood, in line with the ban on expanded plastic trays for these products.

Can I still use butcher's paper and wax paper?

Yes, butcher's paper and wax paper are among a range of packaging options still available to businesses.

Can I still accept reusable containers from customers who choose to bring their own containers from home?

Yes, this ban will not impact any of the reusable packaging options that your customers may already be using. You do have the right to refuse a customer's container if you consider the container dirty or inadequate, or if you consider the container to pose a possible health and safety risk during handling.

How do I know the bag I have chosen is certified compostable?

A certified compostable barrier bag will be certified to the Australian composting standards AS4736-2006 and/or AS5810-2010. These standards are administered by the Australasian Bioplastics Association (ABA) and are commonly referred to as the 'commercial composting standard' and the 'home composting standard' respectively.

As the design standard requires barrier bags certified as compostable to be labelled with either the Seedling compostable logo (for commercial composting) or the Home compostable logo (for home composting), you can verify the compostability of the bags you have chosen by looking for AS4736-2006 or AS5810-2010 labels on the supplied bag. These logos should contain an ABA verification number, which can be used to search for the item's certificate of conformity on the ABA database. Alternatively, a certificate of conformity with this number can be requested from the supplier and verified via this ABA

database: Who is Certified in AUS & NZ – ABA Australasian Bioplastics Association

The <u>Ban Solution Finder Database</u> is also a valuable tool for businesses seeking compliant alternatives to banned single-use plastics in Western Australia.

Are there any support materials available for businesses transitioning to compliant barrier bags?

There is a range of support materials designed to assist businesses with the transition from non-compliant single-use barrier bags to compliant alternatives.

The Government of Western Australia has engaged the National Retail Association (NRA) to support businesses to prepare for, transition and manage the bans. A comprehensive guide for business is free to download and contains details of all existing and upcoming bans in Western Australia. The NRA also provide answers to FAQs and is holding free online information sessions on the first Friday of each month throughout 2025. All businesses impacted by the ban are encouraged to register their attendance. For other queries a tollfree hotline (1800 817 723) and email are listed on the NRA website.

The <u>WA Plan for Plastics</u> webpage provides support material for businesses, and community awareness resources such as banners, video and radio ads that can be used by businesses to inform their customers about the ban.

The Government has also engaged Boomerang Alliance to create the <u>Ban Solution Finder</u>; an online database for finding compliant alternatives to single-use plastic bans. Affected businesses can use this database to specify features the business wishes the product to include and find a list of certified suppliers of compliant alternatives with these specifications.

What are the questions I should be asking my supplier to ensure I am purchasing a bag that is fit-for-purpose for my business?

It is important for you to consider what your business needs are to choose the right barrier bag that it is fit for purpose for your products and operational model. There are a range of questions that you can ask a supplier to help you select the right barrier bag for your business. Examples may include:

- Is the bag certified compostable to AS4736-2006 or AS5810-2010?
- What is the weight limit of the bag?
- Is the bag suitable for the temporary packaging of marinated, oily or fatty wet proteins?
- o Has the bag passed food migration testing?
- Does the bag meet the <u>Food Safety</u>
 <u>Australian and New Zealand standards for food packaging?</u>
- Are there any storage requirements for barrier bags prior to their use? i.e. do they need to be stored out of direct contact with sunlight or in non-humid conditions?
- My current bag disperser is (insert your dispenser type and measurement). It takes rolls (include dimensions of your current rolls). Do you have any compliant barrier bags that would be compatible with my current dispenser?

We encourage you to contact your current supplier (or potential new suppliers) well in advance of the enforcement date to ensure you have sufficient time for these discussions and to trial different compliant alternatives.

Ordering compliant stock before the ban date will also help ensure you have time to use up your existing stock and transition to compliant stock without encountering supply chain issues.

What steps can I take to inform my customers about the transition to compliant barrier bags?

Informing your customers of the upcoming changes to barrier bags will be an important

step in ensuring your business is able to smoothly transition to certified compostable barrier bags. We recommend you inform your customers ahead of time, so they are aware of the coming changes.

There are a range of ways to raise awareness for customers including posting signage at your point of sale and preparing your staff for customer questions. There is <u>free signage</u> available for download on the Plastics Ban WA website. You could also run trials of compliant compostable bags in the lead up to the ban and allow customers to provide feedback on their preferred options.

How can I educate my staff about the changes and ensure they are prepared?

There are a range of ways that you can educate your staff on the ban to ensure they are prepared for any changes in the day-to-day service requirements of their role. These include distributing key Government guidance and factsheet materials, as well as posting back-of-house signage on any new operational requirements or taring requirements that may arise as you transition to compliant alternatives.

► If I am only using barrier bags for unpackaged wet proteins, will I need to meet the bag opening circumference requirement in the design standards?

No, barrier bags that are used exclusively for loose wet proteins or loose bulk dry goods, such as nuts, or confectionery products, will not be required to adhere to the bag opening circumference described in the design standard.

What's the price difference between compostable and non-compostable produce bags?

Currently many of the compostable barrier bags on the market are more expensive per unit, but there are options available that are comparable in price to single-use plastic barrier bags. Compostable barrier bags are becoming more affordable and these margins are expected to improve as supply and demand responds throughout the transition.

▶ I sell cuts of meat for pets. Does this ban apply to me?

Yes, any unpackaged wet protein sold is captured by the ban.

