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SHOP ASSISTANTS SUPPORT PLASTIC BAG BAN

The Rann Government has welcomed figures showing 75 per cent of shop assistants surveyed support its proposed ban of free single-use plastic bags by January and 98.5 per cent see plastic bags as a pollution problem.

Minister for Environment and Conservation Gail Gago says the findings are in a State Government commissioned report to formally identify potential occupational health and safety implications for shop assistants because we need to look after their health during this important change.

“The Government funded this co-operative report - by a doctor and psychologist – because we all need to be adapting to the phase-out of bags,” says the Minister.

“We recognise that employers have legal obligations to provide a safe workplace and the work that has been undertaken will better inform and assist the retail industry in meeting those requirements.

“The bag ban has been coming for a long time and the retail industry has had years to prepare - even during its voluntary effort to try and convert half the plastic bags used to re-usable bags in 2002-05.

“This report makes it clear that their periodic upgrades of checkout areas need to better accommodate the use of re-usable bags and minimise lifting.

“The Government is seeking advice from Safework SA about the best ways to ensure workers are protected from risks.

“We are also pursuing further discussions with the SDA about ways to address appropriate bag sizes.

“I endorse any business promoting its right to refuse to pack any grubby, unpleasant or hazardous re-usable bags, or overload them with weighty items.

“The vast majority of shoppers do the right thing and we should all be considerate of shop assistants’ daily experiences. It’s unfair for any of us to demand excess filling of bags – whether they’re plastic or re-usable – or to be delving into unhygienic carriers.

“The Rann Government has already foreshadowed an education campaign targeting the community, retail sector and shop assistants to balance potential implications. This will be rolled out during the second half of this year.

“We want to rid SA of this environmental scourge which contributes to greenhouse gases, clogs up landfill, litters our streets and streams as well as kills sea life.

“Our ban could see almost 400 million less plastic bags entering the SA waste and litter streams every year – or 1,600 tonnes of plastic,” says Minister Gago.