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SA STILL LEADS FIGHT AGAINST PLASTIC BAGS

South Australian consumers are leading Australia in the fight against plastic shopping bags according to figures released by a major supermarket chain.

Minister for Environment and Conservation John Hill said the figures from Coles and Bi-lo supermarkets in South Australia in 2003 show that the number of single use plastic bags being handed out has fallen by up to 19% (Bi-Lo 19% and Coles 17.6%), compared to the national average of less than 12%.

“After the State Government led the charge for a national ban on the free plastic shopping bag, it’s fitting that South Australian consumers are showing the rest of Australia that we can reduce the number of plastic shopping bags used in Australia. More than 6 billion plastic bags are used in Australia each year with most of those ending up in landfill while others become an environmental hazard killing birds and animals,” the Minister said..

“If these impressive figures from Bi-Lo and Coles were replicated across all South Australian supermarkets it could keep up to 140,000,000 plastic bags out of landfills every year.

“Not only are South Australian consumers leading the way in reducing the number of plastic bags they use, they are also leading the nation in the purchase of alternative bags, such as re-usable plastic and calico.

“The figures for the sale of re-usable bags in Coles supermarkets in 2003 show that 11 of the top 20 supermarkets in the country are in South Australia and that all of the top 7 stores are from SA.

The top 7 are Gawler, Burnside, Colonnades, Marion, St Agnes, West Lakes and Mount Gambier.

“These figures show South Australian shoppers are providing an important example in the lead up to the national ban on plastic bags by the end of 2008. At the moment many shoppers can’t imagine leaving the supermarket without at least half a dozen of these bags.

“Thanks to the strong uptake of alternatives in South Australia and the outright ban in Local Government areas such as Yankalilla and Kangaroo Island there are plenty of shoppers who never accept plastic bags.

“I’d also like to congratulate Coles Myer for assisting their shoppers in moving away from the free plastic bag now, rather than waiting until the total ban comes into force.”