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Friday 11 February 2005

## **SHOPPERS SAY PLASTIC NOT SO FANTASTIC**

A shopping centre in Adelaide's south is tackling an environmental menace with its campaign to eliminate plastic shopping bags.

Environment and Conservation Minister John Hill urged South Australians to follow the lead of Centro Colonnades shopping centre at Noarlunga which has proclaimed today Plastic Bag Free.

More than 100 retailers at Colonnades are helping to end dominance of plastic bags through a replacement bag program, Minister Hill said.

He is presenting a cheque for \$11,000 to Colonnades to support its "We're parting with plastic" campaign, partly-funded by Zero Waste SA, the State Government's recycling agency.

"Single-use plastic bags are simply a curse," Minister Hill said.

"When they disposed of they sit in landfill for more than 100 years without degrading.

"Millions of plastic bags also end up in the sea, threatening marine life.

"There are estimates that more than 100,000 marine creatures including whales, seals, turtles, and birds die every year as a result of getting entangled, or swallowing plastic bags."

Minister Hill said South Australia was already progressing with the push to reduce plastic bags, with a deadline issued by Australia's environment ministers of 2008 for the phasing out of the bags.

"Nationally we were using about 6.9 billion plastic bags annually, about 350 per person, but the Australian Retailers Association says we've seen a 29 per cent reduction in that.

"Through Zero Waste SA we are providing funding for councils and other groups across the state to target reduction of plastic bags. South Australians are responding. More and more shoppers are switching to green bags."

Minister Hill said over the past decade Colonnades shopping centre had progressively introduced a range of innovative recycling programs and other waste reduction measures including education programs for retailers.

"As a result, the centre has sent 20 tonnes less to landfill than at the same time last year," he said.

"Their effort shows how small efforts by individuals are having a collective impact on the fight against plastic bags.

“I urge other retailers, and in particular shopping centre managers to follow the Centro Colonnades lead.

“Through this leadership we should be able to see the phasing out of plastic bags by the end of 2008.”

The centre has:

REDUCED the amount of waste going from the centre to landfill by 2/3s.

RECYCLED over 10,000 cans, glass and PET bottles.

INTRODUCED a green organic collection system that composts discarded fruit, vegetable and organic materials with more than 270 tonnes of green organics composted since 2000.

INTRODUCED a recycling system for plastics generated within the mall. Over 15 tonnes has since been diverted from landfill. The plastic is recycled and manufactured by a local company into posts for vineyards, sleepers, oyster bed poles.

**Minister Hill will be at the Centro Colonnades Shopping Centre, Beach Road, Noarlunga Centre at 11.30am today for the launch of the Plastic Bag Free Day. Meet at the customer service desk near the Ramsay St entrance.**