

Christians for Eco-concern's Submission to
the Environmental Protection Department &
Panel on Environmental Affairs, The Legislative Council, HKSAR
(2 Pages)

Views regarding The Proposal on
An Environmental Levy on Plastic Shopping Bags

1. According to government statistics, more than 23 million plastic shopping bags are disposed of at our landfills every single day. This translates into more than three plastic shopping bags per person per day, which is much higher than our overseas counterparts. An environmental levy, which is in line with the 'polluter pays' principle, to provide a direct economic disincentive to reduce the indiscriminate use of plastic shopping bags.

Our Views: We support the polluter pays principle. Also, we advocate that the **money so collected should be used directly to deal with the specific or other priority environmental problems. Hence, it pays to resolve the problem.** As on the matter of plastic bags, we expect the government to take a more pro-active role to implement the 4 "R" principles, namely, to replace, reduce, reuse and recycle the concerned plastic bags and their production so as to achieve a meaningful target of plastic waste reduction.

2. Under the scheme, EPD proposes a phased approach with the banning of free distribution of plastic shopping bags at chain or large supermarkets, convenience stores and personal healthy and beauty stores and the introduction of an environmental levy of 50 cents on each plastic shopping bag at these retail outlets in the first phase.

Our View: The EPD should take immediate initiative to either replace or reduce the use of plastic bags distributed by newspaper stalls to their customers when newspapers are purchased as well.

3. A public opinion survey conducted in 2006 showed that close to 90% of the respondents believed there was scope to reduce the use of plastic shopping bags in their daily life, while more than 85% of respondents said that they would reduce the use of plastic shopping bags if an environmental levy of 50 cents was imposed. A proposed levy of 50 cents would strike a right balance between public acceptance and effective disincentive and would encourage the customers to think twice before asking for a plastic shopping bag, or to bring their own bags at all time, which was a more sensible choice with the levy in place. In doing so, they not only avoid the levy but also help save the environment.

Our View: EPD should encourage local residents to use environmentally friendly bags by making available reasonably priced bags at major supermarket, chain stores, etc... for their customers' purchase. One way to do it is by cooperating with local concerned groups or manufacturers with a funding incentive to produce or promote the use of such environmentally friendly bags.

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4. It is estimated that the proposed 50 cents levy will reduce about 1 billion plastic shopping bags, or about 50% of plastic shopping bags at the retailers covered by the scheme.

Our View: Periodic review and announcement of the relevant statistics should be made and publicized by the government for the purposes of information, follow-up and education to the public on the matter of reducing plastic wastes.

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