

July 7, 2006

Comment on Draft Report, Waste Productivity Commission

We find your report based firmly on economic principles, and a conviction that these principles are all that should be considered in today's world. As non-experts in economics, but being well educated in science and environmental issues, we feel that this conviction should be modified with the understanding that sometimes the public does not act in a purely self interested way, as economic principles would assume.

In the relatively minor matter of the proliferation of plastic bags in society, and outside it, in 'natural' ecosystems, we feel the public is waiting for leadership from bodies such as yourself. We want to have plastic bags banned, or charged for, regardless of whether or not that fits a current economic model. And this could be applied to a range of other activities ranging from waste minimisation to whaling.

It is time to tap into the goodwill that people are showing by their actions – in the case of plastic bags, buying and using reusable ones, and to modify market models accordingly. Maximum economic efficiency does not always bring maximum community well being. Anti litter programs may be more efficient, but they are too slow for the present world, and should be accompanied by some action, such as banning the bags, or at least charging a hip-pocket-hurting amount for them. The huge number of bags used in Australia every year represents a one way flow of petroleum based resources that we will very soon be unable to afford – let's start doing small things which demonstrate our intelligence to generations to come.

Jill Dumsday
Judith Evans