

Susie Crick, Surfrider Director – Plastic Bags Ban

For any change in mindset of the collective population - collaboration is key. There is an increasing push for community groups to band together to cause a shift which in turn will make the politicians take note. We support national cooperation and uniformity to address the problem of plastic bags, straws and single use plastics.

Surfrider Foundation Australia requires its branch members to actively campaign against plastic bags and encourage others to say NO to plastic bags. The Surfrider Foundation community hold regular beach cleans and actions, where we are seen as role models for others to follow.

We promote key messages through social media campaigns and have a library of pictorial resources that branches share which contain strong images that resonate our message into the community.

Role-modelling and stewardship are honourable, however that is merely a band-aid approach to the catastrophic chasm that plastic pollution is effecting upon our oceans and marine life.

Education of the masses, and reinforcement through graphic advertising campaigns may be one way to tackle the problem. We need to drive home the point to politicians that we cannot sit on our hands and wait for change. We must act NOW. Campaigning and petitions with ugly images may be what is required to get the public to sit up and take notice. If it is in their backyard - then hopefully they will pay attention. On Tuesday 8th November, California voted on banning plastic bags. Their campaigns were constant and determined. We should follow whilst the message is hot on social media (albeit in California).

The banning or imposing of fees on heavily littered items such as single-use plastic bags, food and single-use take away beverage containers and straws, could be a recommendation for government action. This would significantly reduce the amount of plastic that enters Australia's oceans and waterways.

It should be noted that this is a national problem and community groups (of any size) from regional country areas should be invited to participate in these forums. For example, Lis Bastien who heads up the THE BIG FIX has just had success in banning plastic straws in Blackheath. Small communities such as Blackheath who are inspired by passionate leaders such as Lis show us that you move the mountain one rock at a time. The SFA believes that the plastics issue isn't only for coastal dwellers as everyone in Australia must realise that 'we all live downstream' and whatever happens up the rivers, flows down to the sea.

For more information please visit our website at: <http://www.surfrider.org.au>. You may also contact us via email at either: southcoastnsw@surfrider.org.au or info@surfrider.org.au