

Ban is finally in the bag

By Libby Bingham

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Tasmanian director of Do Something Ben Kearney (correct) is extatic that after 10 years of campaigning, legislation has passed State Parliament banning plastic bags.

A BAN on plastic shopping bags in Tasmania has come better late than never for a key campaigner on the issue, Ulverstone's Ben Kearney.

Mr Kearney is celebrating the ban which will apply to Tasmanian shops and supermarkets from November.

It comes after a bill was passed in the state's upper house this week.

South Australia, the Northern Territory and the ACT have already enacted similar bans.

Mr Kearney made national headlines when he campaigned for Coles Bay to become the first plastic bag-free town in Australia 10 years ago.

He said he was disappointed it took 10 years in his state.

Mr Kearney said it was a shame Tasmania had not led the nation on the bans.

"There has always been strong support from the Greens and the Liberal Party and a tripartite approach came about in 2011 when David O'Byrne was environment minister," Mr Kearney said.

"It takes the stars to align politically sometimes.

"I am really pleased it has happened now.

"We have been campaigning for a long time and it is great to see this result.

"Now I hope the other states will follow."

The ban covers light-weight bags used for groceries, takeaway food and retail goods.

It will not apply to biodegradable plastic bags, heavier plastic bags that can be reused, reusable bags or thin-film barrier bags.

Mr Kearney is the Tasmanian director of the Do Something charity and he was at Coles Bay recently to celebrate the town's environmental leadership.

He said that during the past 10 years plastic bag usage had been reduced by two million bags.

Mr Kearney said while it had been a long road, the ban was worth it.