

Asian Correspondent

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Consumers buying too many environmentally friendly shopping bags

For years activists have been kicking up a fuss about plastic shopping bags, billions of which either end up as landfill or are discarded into the environment where they become lodged in the blowholes of baby dolphins and in the digestive tracts of everything from echidnas to albatrosses, killing them in the millions. It is truly amazing that any Australian wildlife has managed to survive this plastic onslaught.

Hence the growing popularity of green reusable shopping bags amongst consumers wanting to be seen to do the "right thing" by the environment. Unfortunately, **this solution to the bag problem looks to be a bigger problem than the problem it fixes.**

According to environmental activists, consumers are buying way too many of the so called green bags, which inevitably means that some of the bags, which unlike flimsy disposable bags are virtually indestructible, are ending up as landfill. Employing the impeccable logic for which lefty activists are renowned this problem is blamed not on the people who buy and discard the bags but rather on "profiteering" supermarket chains:

Coles and Woolworths are profiteering from the popularity of so-called eco-friendly bags, the Clean Up Australia Day founder said. He accused the supermarket chains, which together have sold almost 20 million reusable bags, of "trading off the green potential" of the now ubiquitous products rather than encouraging shoppers to cut consumption.

"They haven't partnered with the community, which they should have done to get it to change behaviour instead of just shovelling [the bags] out the door as quick as they can, selling them like a string of sausages."

Thus for the first time in recorded history selling a universally available low-cost product is profiteering.

Anyway, the green bags are environmentally friendly but only if used repeatedly:

A report last year by the Sustainable Packaging Alliance, commissioned by Woolworths, found reusable bags have a lower environmental toll than single-use bags, but only when used 104 times - or once a week over two years. The impact on global warming of a reusable polypropylene bag used only 52 times is worse than a standard plastic shopping bag.

It's hard to believe that very many of the green bags will be used more than 100 times. And anyone keeping bags that long will probably want to launder them at least once, thus increasing their environmental impact. Gee, it looks like those cheap disposable bags aren't so bad after all.