

Otago Daily Times

Online Edition | Saturday, 5 September 2009 | 09:43:18

Resistance to 5c bag fee spreads north

Fri, 4 Sep 2009

[News: National](#)

Consumer resistance to paying for plastic bags has spread north, with New World and Four Square supermarkets in the upper North Island today removing a 5c charge.

The move follows the axing of the same fee at the same supermarkets in the lower North Island three days ago.

It comes just four weeks after the stores, which are part of the Foodstuffs chain, introduced the levy in an attempt to get people to reduce their reliance on plastic bags.

Foodstuffs Auckland's general manager of retail sales and performance, Murray Jordan, said the charge had been removed in response to customer feedback.

"Our customers have spoken and we have listened," he said.

"Our owner operators, who know their customers, have been receiving a lot of feedback on the floor and this feedback has been confirmed by a customer survey."

Mr Jordan said there had been an "exceptional increase" in people using reusable bags and Foodstuffs would continue to put measures in place that recognised those customers.

However, the 5c levy is remaining at New World and Four Square supermarkets in the South Island.

Foodstuffs South Island's general manager for retail operations, Alan Malcolmson, said there had been great support from customers and plastic bag use had dropped 60 percent over the past month.

As a result of the fee, \$50,000 would be donated to five South Island environmental projects identified by the Department of Conservation.

"This is just the first of what we envisage will be ongoing support for environmental projects," Mr Malcolmson said.

"It's a win-win for the environment -- bags being saved and projects benefiting." Mr Malcolmson said a levy introduced in Ireland in 2002 had cut plastic bag usage by 90%, while Coles in Australia had indicated they were about to start charging as well.