



**BOOMERANG
ALLIANCE**
Plastic Free Places

In partnership
with



GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Department of
Water and Environmental Regulation

SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING FOR MEAT, SEAFOOD & DAIRY

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR BUTCHERS AND DELIS UNDER THE WA SINGLE-USE PLASTIC BARRIER BAG BAN

Western Australia is phasing out non-compostable barrier bags. As of 1 October 2026, this includes barrier bags used for loose/unpackaged meat, seafood and dairy products, as well as loose dry nuts and confectionery.

For butchers and delis, this means rethinking how you package your wet products like meat, seafood and cheese.

This guide shows you how to make that shift, with practical advice on compostable options and reusable systems that are already working in butchers and delis across the country.



COMPLIANT ALTERNATIVES & HOW TO USE THEM

1. REUSABLE/REFILLABLE CONTAINERS

Reusable/refillable containers are an effective way to reduce single-use plastics, and many WA butchers, delis, and their customers are already using them successfully. Accepting reusable/refillable containers can also build customer loyalty and reduce your packaging costs over time.

With clear practices, accepting customer containers can be a safe and easily managed everyday process.



Options

Accepting Customer Containers

Start small by encouraging your regulars to bring their own clean containers. This is commonly used for fresh meat and deli goods portioned behind the counter.

- The customer presents a clean, open container at the counter.
- Staff fill the container (without handling the lid).
- The customer replaces the lid themselves.

Pre-Packed Collection

- Customers leave clean, labelled containers for later pick-up.
- Staff fill them during quiet times and store chilled for collection.
- Great for special orders and regulars.

Container Swap System

Set up a container swap system for your regular customers, enabling them to borrow and return containers to you, like a library.

- These can be provided by a [reusable container swap service](#) that manages the system on your behalf (usually for a small fee per use).
- These can also be self-managed by buying containers that you lend out to your regulars by taking a deposit and refunding or swapping on return.

Best practices

- Start small by encouraging your regulars to bring their own clean containers.
- Use signage to explain your policy and build customer confidence.
- For weight-bases items, weigh the empty container first and then Tare the scales.
- If placing labels or stickers on customer's containers, ensure they can be peeled off easily without soaking.
- Ensure the containers are cool before placing meat and produce in them. Containers presented for use after being in a hot car should be allowed to cool first.
- Customers are advised to retain their container lids to minimise handling and potential contamination.
- Ensure to adhere to food safety requirements below.

Food Safety and Legal Considerations

The WA Government supports the safe use of customer provided containers under food safety regulations.

In order to adhere to food safety regulations ([Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code](#)), ensure to:

1. Only accept clean, undamaged reusable containers to minimise potential contamination.
2. Only accept containers that are genuinely 'reusable' (not designed for single use) and have a fitted lid. This way you can be sure that the container is made to be washed and hold food safely.

You can find more detailed information on reusables, health, safety and the law on the [Plastic Ban Solution Finder Website](#)



2. COMPOSTABLE OR UNLINED PAPER

Paper can be used where appropriate for wrapping items like cheese, cured meats and rolls.

Options

- Unlined paper (grease resistant options available, check with your supplier).
- Certified compostable paper.

Best practices

- Use for less messy items or pre-packed portions.
- Store in a dry, flat area to avoid grease bleed-through.
- Avoid paper lined with conventional plastic.



3. COMPOSTABLE BARRIER BAGS

These are a replacement for traditional single-use plastic barrier bags and can be used in the same way.

To be ban compliant for use with wet products like meat, seafood and cheese, compostable barrier bags must:

- be certified to the Australian Industrial Composting Standard AS 4736-2006 or the Australian Home Composting Standard AS 5810-2010,
- display the logo issued by the Australian Bioplastics Association for the respective standard,
- be transparent, with a green or white tint allowed,
- not have handles.



Compostable

AS 4736
ABAX 9999



Home Compostable

AS 5810
ABAX 9999

Best practices

- Stock rotation: Compostable bags have a shelf life of 6 –12 months. Store in a cool, dry place, away from heat and light.
- Trialling alternatives: Trialling will help in selecting the right option for your products and operational model. Examples of what to consider include;
 - The weight limit of the bag and the strength of the bag seams.
 - The ability of the bag to handle moisture without leakage. This is particularly important for higher moisture and higher fat content.
 - The gusset type (e.g., star or flat seam) can influence the width of the roll and ease of bag opening.
- Labelling is key: Ensure bags clearly state they are compostable and meet AS 4736 or AS 5810.

For a list of compliant compostable barrier bags please check the [Plastic Ban Solution Finder database](#).

Handy Tips

- Compostable barrier bags can be less puncture-resistant than non-compostable barrier bags. Prawns, whole fish, skewers and kebabs can puncture through non-compostable barrier bags, so you may need to consider alternative solutions, such as accepting customers' clean reusable containers or using clear plastic trays, which are ban-compliant for the sale of **raw meat and seafood products**.
- The thickness of the barrier bag film may not necessarily mean the bag is more moisture- or puncture-resistant.



LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Butchers and delis are already making the change – see how two businesses in WA are leading the way.



Kakulas Sister Delicatessen
Fremantle, Perth



CJ's Gourmet Butchers
Ocean Reef