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## **PRESS RELEASE**

The “Say No to Single Use Plastic Bags” has taken a step forward in Rathmines with the Rathmines Area Sustainable Neighbourhood Group initiative to try and reduce the use of plastic bags in the Rathmines Shopping Centre.

Plastic Bags are a real threat to our wildlife when they are discarded, as they do not decompose and create problems for a long time. Here in Lake Macquarie this is especially so as they can end up in the Lake and the Ocean where turtles are especially prone to being injured by them as they mistake them for jellyfish, one of their favourite foods, and end up blocking their digestive tract so they starve to death.

At the Rathmines Shopping Centre the Butcher and IGA, and the nearby Catalina Conference/Function Centre, have agreed to host Bag Swap Stations, where people who have forgotten their reusable carry bags can borrow a bag and return it the next time they shop, together with any spare bags they may have. Customers are already taking advantage of this facility which is a satisfying outcome and the enthusiasm of the shopkeepers has been outstanding.

Most States have, or are about to, ban the use of Single Use Plastic Bags, and the two largest supermarkets, Coles and Woolworths, have taken the initiative in NSW and are stopping their use early next year. Meanwhile the Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance is trying to reduce their use in Lake Macquarie by introducing Bag Swap Stations to local Shopping Centres, and the Rathmines Area Group has now got this program under way in our local area.

