

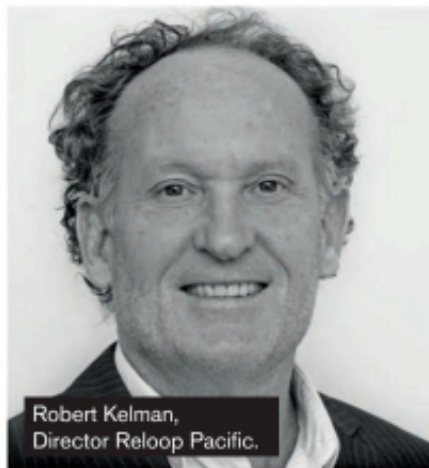
There's an opportunity to bring Australia's CDSs in line with global best practice collection rates.

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ROBERT KELMAN, DIRECTOR RELOOP PACIFIC, SAYS A CHANGE IS NEEDED FOR AUSTRALIA'S CONTAINER DEPOSIT SCHEMES TO REACH GLOBAL BEST PRACTICE.

Australia will, with the advent of the Tasmanian and Victorian Container Deposit Schemes (CDS) next year, be the first continent globally with full CDS coverage.

Unfortunately, with current design, billions of drink containers are still being littered or landfilled in Australia every year and our circular economy outcomes are, as a result,



Robert Kelman,
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poor. Australia's collection rates are somewhere between 60 and 76 per cent, while European schemes generally recycle 90 per cent or more.

In general terms the 10-cent refund is increasingly meaningless to most Australian consumers and all states need more accessible return points.

South Australia's long-awaited CDS reform is progressing, though it appears at this stage could be a missed opportunity.

South Australia should be setting an agenda for the rest of the country to get to 90 per cent or more in return rates. Why wouldn't they? But real modernisation is required – i.e. the government could protect the depot operators and haul in an additional 20 per cent of containers with some additional convenient consumer return options but they appear reluctant to do so. An overdue 'consumer motivations' study won't now arrive

until after legislation is drafted, so its impact on design decisions would appear limited; and it appears any new target will be set based on what 'can be achieved' rather than as a direction for where the government wants the scheme to go.

Circular economy outcomes of bottle-to-bottle recycling are dependent on the success of the CDS collection networks. This stream of materials provides for much higher quality and consistency of product than that recovered through Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs).

The most recent public data from the ACT outlines an even split of 34 per cent for both CDS and MRF returns, leading to a total 68 per cent collection rate.

All schemes must prioritise shifting as much material as possible out of the kerbside stream and into the CDS network. This limits contamination



Kelman believes Australia's CDSs are being stymied by low refund values.

and ensures consumers aren't being short-changed on their refunds.

Accurate and transparent data reporting is also important. It's vital the community is provided with accurate and transparent reporting.

Victoria and Tasmania, as the newest schemes coming online, should ensure timely, accurate and transparent reporting protocols so we avoid having to dig around for accurate information.

The Queensland Minister is now looking for a new independent Chair for Container Exchange (COEX) and there's a post for a new Chief Executive Officer.

The Minister also recently announced: "The department at the end of the year will conduct a review to see how we can stop even more containers from ending in landfill." This is welcome and gives an opportunity for scheme participants to

reset in the aim to achieve the 85 per cent target.

Though, even the New South Wales scheme, generally accepted to offer relatively high levels of consumer convenience, is proving difficult to shift recovery rates toward 80 per cent (albeit this scheme experienced COVID shutdowns in late 2021).

The lack of a mandate on retailers to take-back containers and Australia's low refund value stymies our beverage container recycling outcomes.

It would make sense to immediately set Australian states refunds at 30 cents to future proof and avoid having to re-prosecute the issue. Most of Europe is already above A30cent equivalent and New Zealand is proposing to start its CDS at NZD20cents. New Zealand is also going for global best practice with a hybrid collection network mandating retailers (over a certain size) to take back containers as well as zero-waste-

style depots and thinking about how to embed refillable bottles in its economy.

Australian CDS's will, I believe, continue to struggle getting to the container return rates required or the truly circular economy outcomes expected by Australian consumers.

As we seek to modernise or improve CDS' across Australia, we need scheme co-ordinators and collection point operators working more collaboratively; we must institute a meaningful refund value and purposefully aim for an achievable 90 per cent or more return rate. ■

Reloop works at the intersection of governments, industry stakeholders and NGOs who share a common vision of a thriving circular economy. Reloop's policy positions and recommendations are based on data-driven research, best-in-class principles and real world case studies.