



6 August 2025

The Hon. Steve Dimopoulos
Minister for Environment
Level 16, 8 Nicholson Street
East Melbourne
VIC 3002

Dear Minister

Ahead of the next Environment Ministers Meeting, we write as a collective of businesses in the waste and recycling sectors, and not for profits who share an interest in seeing better outcomes from Australia's Container Deposit Schemes (CDS).

All of Australia's return schemes see low container return rates compared with the majority of established global schemes. As such, we are all strongly of the view that, based on international best practice, the most effective way of increasing return rates of beverage containers and reducing litter is to **increase the refund amount to at least 20c** per container to encourage more people to participate.

In the EU for example, collection rates are above 90% in nine of the top 10 performing schemes. What these schemes have in common is a significantly higher refund amount than the 10c offered by the schemes in Australia.

Refunds in the top 10 EU schemes range from €0.10c (AUD 0.18c) in Estonia, €0.20c (AUD 0.35c) in Finland and €0.25c (AUD 0.44c) in Germany. In comparison, Australian schemes have an average return rate of 68%, which is well below this 90%+ return rate benchmark.

There will not be any significant change in Australian CDS return rates unless there is a more substantial financial incentive for ordinary Australians to participate, resulting in billions of recyclable bottles and cans continuing to be sent to landfill or entering the litter stream.

Just last year, it's estimated that more than 1.3 billion PET plastic soft drink bottles alone ended up in landfill or the litter stream in Australia instead of being returned for recycling.

As a matter of national environmental importance, we urge you and your State and Territory colleagues to instigate an increase in the container refund amount to at least 20c and commit to periodic reviews to factor in CPI increases to provide a meaningful incentive for consumers now and into the future.

Increasing the amount of material in the recycling stream directly supports State and Federal circular economy policies and will stimulate additional investment and employment in the waste recovery and recycling sectors.

An increase in the refund amount is not without precedent. Back in 1977 when South Australia introduced Australia's first CDS, the refund was 5c. That was increased to 10c per bottle or can in September 2008 and has not been increased since.

The reality is that in 2025, a 10c refund does not have the pulling power needed to significantly increase consumer engagement in container deposit schemes.





Charities, sport and recreation clubs, and many people struggling with the cost of living regularly collect and return containers as a way of raising money. Increasing the refund to 20c would provide a major incentive for these people and many others to return more containers and give them extra money to support their needs.

Increasing the return rate of recyclable bottles and containers will necessitate providing more, and more convenient, options for consumers to return their containers. Allowing people to return bottles and cans to retailers, for example, is commonplace in the EU.

We expect the foreign-owned beverage companies will oppose increasing the refund amount, citing cost of living pressures. Increasing the refund amount has no impact on consumers who return their bottles or cans for a refund.

It's worth noting that collectively, the combined reported profits in 2024 of the three largest beverage companies operating in Australia (Coca-Cola Europacific Partners, Asahi Beverages and Lion Nathan) totalled more than \$5 billion for their regional operations on the back of healthy beverage volume growth.

We believe there needs to be national leadership to drive change for the better in Australia's container deposit schemes and would urge this be given priority at the next Environment Ministers' Meeting.

Regards,

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