

NSW Container Deposit Scheme: response to Discussion Paper

Climate Change Balmain-Rozelle (CCBR) is a not-for-profit community group operating in Sydney's inner west. We strongly support Option 1, a refund Container Deposit Scheme.

The group, with a supporter base of over 700, is concerned about the climate change aspect of waste. We recognise that beverages are almost always sold in single-use containers, and consider it vital that as many of these are recycled as possible.

As community members, we care about litter, the impact of plastics in our oceans, and the expansion of landfill areas. However, our group is particularly concerned about the greenhouse gas impact of producing new plastics where recycled materials will have a lower greenhouse gas impact, and the greenhouse gas impact of abandoned plastics as they break down in smaller particles, releasing CO₂ in the process.

The NSW Environment Protection Authority, for example (*Environmental Benefits of Recycling*, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW, June 2010) found that overall plastics generate significant net benefits when recycled [compared to the cost of producing new material]. (For aluminium, this is markedly so). Recycling plastics and aluminium had net benefits on cumulative energy demand as well.

We therefore support initiatives that maximize recycling as well as reduce litter. An increased focus on resource recovery through a container deposit scheme has the potential to focus consumers to consider how they dispose of their waste in public places, and to view it increasingly as a resource. This may increase recycling rates overall.

Our particular comments below relate to the scope of containers to be included in the scheme, the collection infrastructure and the governance model to be adopted.

We urge the adoption of as strong and comprehensive a scheme as possible, as we consider this an overdue opportunity for NSW to show leadership.

Scope of containers

We support the position put forward by the Total Environment Centre (TEC) for a container universe to include containers up to 3 litres (with the exceptions noted by the TEC). This would bring the scheme in line with the South Australian and Northern Territory models.

We understand from the discussion paper that including all drink containers in the NSW CD scheme will likely increase recycling rates; whereas excluding

larger containers is confusing for consumers and means bottlers have to label containers differently in different states.

While larger containers are more likely to appear in the kerbside waste stream than in public places, including containers up to 3 litres provides an incentive for return rather than littering away from home, and also a likely economic benefit for councils running kerbside collections.

As detailed in the discussion paper (p37), the likely difference in adopting a broader scope is capturing 86% rather than 76% of litter volume. If NSW is to introduce a CD scheme, let us make it as effective as possible.

Collection infrastructure

We support the return to depot approach using Reverse Vending Machines, supported by kerbside collection, and manual collection if needed in rural and regional centres.

The scheme should aim for universal access for NSW residents. Littering along highways in rural areas is very significant, and remedial costs very expensive, so we cannot afford to ignore these areas.

Governance

We support a single, independent, not-for profit body to coordinate the scheme, to ensure efficiency, community confidence and equity between stakeholders.