

SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE MANAGEMENT OF AUSTRALIA'S WASTE STREAMS

FROM: AFROCAB (Australians for Refunds on Cans and Bottles)

This submission focuses on point f of the inquiry which is 'consideration of the Drink Container Recycling Bill 2008'. However, as will be explained in the conclusion, the information below is also relevant to points 'a to e' of this inquiry.

We represent the views of many individuals and groups who clean up litter on a regular basis. The view of these individuals and groups is that drink containers are a major litter problem. This is because existing policies are not working. Proven solutions are needed to fix this problem. For that reason, we support the introduction of a national container deposit system similar to that which operates in South Australia.

We hope this committee will not be convinced to think that drink containers are not a major litter item. Evidence that they are a major litter item is not difficult to find.

Firstly, figures from the 2006 National Litter Index showed that drink containers are the Number One litter item by volume and the Number Three litter Item by quantity. Secondly, one third of litter collected on Clean Up Australia Day this year were drink containers. Thirdly, by comparing production and recycling rates for drink containers it can be seen at least 3 billion drink containers are not recycled in Australia year.* Many of these 3 billion drink containers become litter.

The most compelling reason why Australia should introduce a national container deposit is because of the very large reductions in CO2 emissions that could be achieved. This assertion is based on the 2007 report of the Stakeholders Advisory Group which investigated a best practice container deposit system for Western Australia. It concluded that a container deposit system in WA 'would reduce CO2 emissions there by tens of thousands of tonnes per year'. It also said 'it would save millions of litres of water'.*

Given the challenges posed by global warming and climate change we do not believe Australia can afford to ignore either of these benefits. Moreover, the Australian Government should be doing everything it can to reduce our emissions.

The benefits of a container deposit system however, are not limited to the above. There are many other important reasons (outlined below) why the government should introduce a deposit system.

1. It will compliment and support our existing kerbside recycling system. The South Australian experience proves this. There both systems co-exist side by side. The previously mentioned Stakeholders Advisory Report in Western Australia also concluded that a deposit system there 'would be complimentary to and support their existing kerbside system'.
2. A container deposit system would capture many of the containers from the 50% of beverages that are consumed away from home and away from kerbside recycling opportunities. The inability of our kerbside system to do this is the main reason why the recycling rate for plastic and glass bottles is so low outside of South Australia.
3. At least 3 billion drink containers are not recycled in Australia every year. These either end up as litter in our environment or as landfill. A deposit system would significantly increase the recycling rate as the 5 cent refund on drink containers in South Australia has proven.* A 10 cent refund for a national system would result in even higher recycling rates.
4. A national deposit system would conserve both finite landfill space and the non renewable resources that most drink containers are made from.
5. Millions of the 3 billion drink containers referred to above end up in our waterways. By reducing litter a deposit system would significantly reduce this problem.
6. As shown in South Australia, a deposit system would put money back into the community via charities and community groups. No longer would drink containers be valueless litter items. Instead they would be an important source of fundraising.

7. Young Australians would hold on to their drink containers and cash them in. Others would pick up any that had been littered. In so doing, they will be helping their country, their community and the environment.
8. The cost of collecting litter is a growing financial burden on councils and ratepayers. Victorian Councils spend over \$50 million a year on litter. (Municipal Association Victoria). Because drink containers are presently the number one litter item by volume and the number three litter item by quantity a significant reduction in drink container litter will save the community money.
9. The problem of drink container litter has got worse under the National Packaging Covenant. We should not wait until the end of the present covenant before introducing Container Deposit Legislation.
10. The number one prerequisite for an effective and successful litter policy is public support. Container Deposit Legislation has long had a high level of public support. The deposit system in SA has twice been shown to have a public approval rating of over 90%. Opinion polls in other states have shown similar results.* On April 10th 2008, in the Herald Sun, 220 community groups stated their support for the introduction of a container deposit system in Victoria.
11. Container deposit legislation is relevant to points a to e of this inquiry. Firstly, the problem of drink container litter is a result of a consumer trend in waste production namely the trend towards single use drink containers for away from home consumption. Secondly, this problem exists because of the inability of existing strategies to address away from home consumption. Thirdly, as a new strategy (outside SA) deposit systems have demonstrated potential to take millions of drink containers out of the litter stream and redirect them into the recycling stream. Fourthly, deposit systems will improve the economic viability of existing kerbside recycling systems. They will also have many social and environmental benefits as described above. Finally, interstate and overseas experience confirms that deposit systems do reduce waste and increase recycling. For that reason, the introduction of a national deposit system should be a high priority for the Australian Government.

- 3 billion drink containers not recycled every year is based on the following. 2.2 billion PET bottles produced annually. Only 35% are recycled. 3 billion aluminium cans are produced annually. Only 65% are recycled. Only 40% of glass bottles are recycled.
- *For Stakeholders Advisory Report see www.zerowastewa.com.au/ourwork/specificprograms
- 35% PET bottles are recycled nationally. 74% are recycled in SA. 65% of aluminium cans are recycled nationally. 84% are recycled in SA. 40% of glass bottles are recycled nationally. 80% are recycled in SA.
- In 2006 we commissioned a Newspoll which showed that 94% of respondents supported the introduction of a deposit system in Victoria.