

Additional Comments - Australian Greens

The Committee's inquiry into this Bill was an opportunity to survey the attitudes of industry, local council and community groups on a national scheme to deal with over 11 billion glass, plastic, steel, aluminium, PET and HDPE bottles used by Australians every year, 512,000 tonnes of which is currently going to landfill.

The Committee learned is that there is overwhelming support for such a scheme. Local councils understand the benefits; Australia's umbrella local government organisation has passed a resolution in support, as have many individual councils. Key industry players including as Visy, Alcoa, Revive Recycling, Eco-Waste and Sita Environmental Solutions expressed support. Community support runs in the 80-90% range in consecutive polls, and the Government of South Australia strongly supports a national version of the scheme that has operated successfully there for decades.

The Committee's report continues a recent pattern of providing evidence and coherent arguments for a proposal followed by a contradictory recommendation.

There is increasing impatience with the federal government for failing to act, when recycling container deposits will reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 1 million tonnes of CO₂ per year – the equivalent of switching 135,000 homes to 100% renewable energy. The scheme will save enough water to permanently supply over 30,000 Australian homes. It will deliver air quality improvements equivalent to taking 56,000 cars off the road. It will create approximately 1000 direct jobs and decrease litter.

The time has come for a national container deposit scheme. The benefits of the scheme contained in the Greens Bill is that it will fund the establishment of a network of recycling centres, into which other waste streams can be folded, such as e-waste, batteries etc. Another benefit is that the surplus that will be created by the scheme can be used to support industries to reprocess and recycle materials.

For decades the South Australian scheme has shown the way. Other jurisdictions are impatiently waiting for Commonwealth leadership, and this report is another missed opportunity for that leadership to be expressed. The 5 November meeting of the Environment Protection and Heritage Council will consider investigations undertaken on the community willingness to pay for a greater uptake of recycling. The EPHC must deliver a timetable and costed proposal at this meeting.

Senator Scott Ludlam
Senator for Western Australia

