

LGAT Opinion Editorial – Tasmania needs a container refund scheme for the community

Local Government bears the brunt of waste management and recycling and we are also responsible for much of the state's litter collection and rubbish removal. And that is why Tasmanian councils are supportive of the Government introducing a container refund scheme (CRS).

Importantly for councils the expected reduction in container litter from a CRS not only removes the burden of plastics in environment, but it also increases recycling rates.

Local Government is the closest level of government to the community and we are experts in waste management, and we support a split-governance model for Tasmania's CRS, akin to the approach adopted by NSW. This model separates responsibility for running the scheme from operating the container collection network. This differs from Queensland and Western Australia where the responsibility for running the scheme and operating the collection network is undertaken by a single entity.

This difference is important because in most jurisdictions it is the beverage producers who run the scheme. This makes good sense because for every drink container that is returned it costs them money, therefore they seek to minimize the scheme costs. However, it should be a separate independent organisation that runs the container collection network.

Under this model the network operator is motivated to capture as many containers as possible as they get paid per container collected and recycled. They do this by making the collection points as convenient as possible and more containers returned means a lower cost scheme for the community and better environmental outcomes. Beverage producers are far less motivated to achieve this outcome. Avoiding paying back consumers refunds is a huge financial motivation for these companies.

By separating running the scheme from the network the State Government can guarantee consumer convenience and therefore high rates of container return. We don't want a collection network that is difficult to access and costs consumers when they can't get their refund back.

Who do you want determining how easy it is to return your containers – a company that benefits from more containers being returned or a company that benefits from less?

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