

CDL in South Australia: overview and achievements

In 1975 the South Australian Government introduced Container Deposit Legislation (CDL) that imposed a deposit on a range of beverage containers. The deposit is included in the retail price and is refunded when the container is returned to a collection point. Similar schemes operate in other countries but South Australia remains the only Australian state or territory with this type of legislation.

Why Container Deposit Legislation?

The original aim of CDL was to reduce litter. This was a growing problem in the 1970s, due in part to the increasing use of non-refillable beverage containers. CDL has also become an important strategy in waste minimisation. The recycling or reuse of containers diverts material from landfill, conserves resources and reduces pollution and energy consumption.

In 2003, encouraged by the success of CDL, the South Australian Government extended the scheme to cover a wider range of beverages.

Beverages covered by CDL

| Beverage | Container type | Size | Effective date |
|---|----------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| Carbonated soft (non-alcoholic) drinks | All | Up to and including three litres | Pre-2003 |
| Water (plain, still or carbonated) | All | Up to and including three litres | Pre-2003 |
| Beers/ales/stout | All | Up to and including three litres | Pre-2003 |
| Wine based beverages (wine cooler and similar beverages) | All | Up to and including three litres | Pre-2003 |
| Spirit-based beverages | All | Up to and including three litres | Pre-2003 |
| Non-carbonated soft (non-alcoholic) drinks | All | Up to and including three litres | 1 Jan 03 |
| Pure fruit juice (at least 90% of which is fruit or vegetable juice or a mixture of both) | All | Less than one litre | 1 Jan 03 |
| Flavoured milk | All | Less than one litre | 1 Jan 03 |
| Alcoholic beverages (derived from the fermentation of fruit) | All | Up to and including three litres | 1 Jan 03 |

Certain beverages and their containers are exempted – plain milk, wine, fruit juice and flavoured milk in containers over one litre, and any containers greater than three litres – because they are not generally consumed as take-away products and therefore do not usually contribute to the litter problem.

Refund markings

All beverage containers subject to CDL in South Australia display approved markings that show where the refund is available:

- '10c refund at points of sale when sold in SA' means that the container must be returned to a retailer who sells the beverage in that container; and
- '5c at collection depots when sold in SA' means that the container must be returned to a collection depot. Collection depots are the most common points of return.

South Australia's CDL collection depot system

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| STEP 1 Beverage filler | Manufacturer/filler/wholesaler supplies to the retailer. 5c deposit and agreed handling fee is included in the beverage's wholesale price. | Deposit and handling fee is retained by the beverage filler or their agent who operates as the collection coordinator. This is held until the deposit containers are returned to them to be recycled. |
| STEP 2 Retailer (e.g. hotels, delis, supermarkets) | The retailer supplies consumers. The 5c deposit and handling fee is included in the beverage's retail price. | |
| STEP 3 Consumer or community group | Return deposit containers to recycling depot for full payment of the 5c deposit. | |
| STEP 4 Recycling depot | Sorts the containers by material and responsible agent – i.e. glass, aluminium, PET – into containers for return to the collection coordinators. | |
| STEP 5 Collection coordinator | Once containers are sorted, they are sent back to the collection coordinator, agent for the recycling of material and auditing. | Collection coordinators pay the recycling depot back the 5c deposits which they paid out to the consumer in Step 3, plus an agreed handling fee for their containers. |

How the collection depot system works

There are approximately 140 collection depots across the state, and are spaced at least every 5 km in the Adelaide metropolitan area. The depots sort the various container types and brands and prepare them for transport to a 'super collector'. There are four super collectors in South Australia.

The super collectors act as agents for the beverage industry. They:

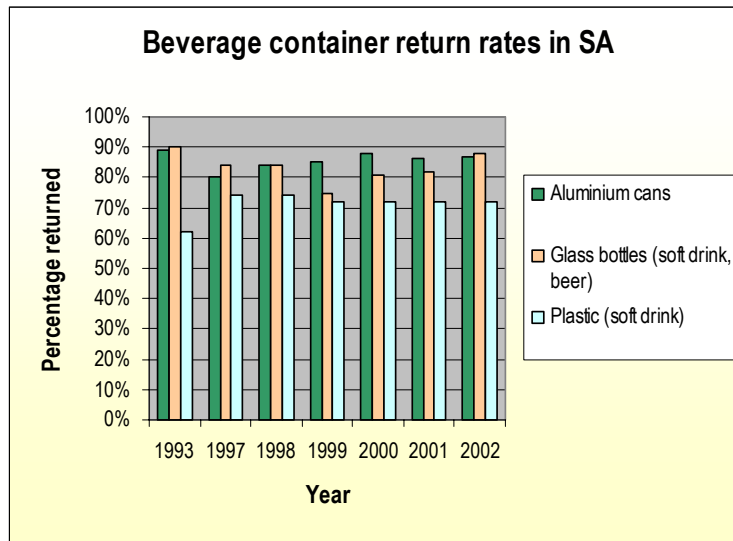
- coordinate the return of empty containers from collection depots;
- reimburse depots for refunds paid to consumers and pay depots a handling fee; and
- sell the containers to material recyclers and processors for recycling, reuse or recovery of energy.

The super collector in turn claims the deposit and handling fee from the beverage filler.

More than 600 people are employed directly because of CDL (Adelaide, the main population centre in South Australia, has a population of 1.5 million). The South Australian EPA administers and oversees the program, which is estimated to cost \$1.14/person/year. The EPA has also recently set up Zero Waste South Australia, funded by an increased waste levy (doubled to \$10/tonne) to drive and implement further waste reduction measures in South Australia.

Beverage Container Return Rates

CDL has been very effective in reducing beverage container litter (in 1999 only 1% of total litter items found were CDL beverage containers), and achieving high resource recovery rates (see graph below).



Public support for CDL

CDL receives extremely strong public support in South Australia. A telephone survey conducted by the South Australian Environment Protection Agency (EPA) in 1993 revealed that 95% of respondents supported the concept of a refundable drink container deposit. An EPA survey conducted in June 2004 found that:

- 60% of survey respondents returned beverage containers to collection/recycling depots;
- 32% did not collect the refund and disposed of containers using kerbside recycling services;
- only 4% generally throw empty beverage containers covered by CDL into garbage bins; and
- 80% said they would still purchase the same amount of beverages per week if an increase in the refund amount drove beverage prices up.

Sources

SA Environment Protection Authority (2000). *Container deposit legislation: economic and environmental impacts*. Available online at http://www.epa.sa.gov.au/pdfs/cdl_report.pdf. Link checked Feb 2005.

SA Environment Protection Authority (2004). *Container deposit legislation (CDL) – a South Australian environmental success story*. Available online at http://www.epa.sa.gov.au/pdfs/info_cdl.pdf. Link checked Feb 2005.

SA Department of Environment and Heritage. *Beverage Container Return Rates SA*. Available online at: <http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/reporting/human/waste/recycled.html#beverage>. Link checked Feb 2005.

Envision NZ (June 2004). *Getting Serious about Packaging Waste – A critique of the new Packaging Accord, an Analysis of Overseas Examples, and Recommendations for an Effective Packaging Policy for New Zealand*. Available online at http://www.greens.org.nz/campaigns/waste/Getting_Serious_About_Packaging.pdf. Link checked Feb 2005.

Hudson, P., in association with Cole Solicitors (March 2000). *Container Deposit Legislation: Economic and environmental impacts*. Report prepared for the South Australian Environment Protection Authority. Available online at http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/epa/pdfs/cdl_report.pdf. Link checked Feb 2005.

McGregor Tan Research (2004). *Community awareness and acceptance of Container Deposit Legislation*. Prepared for the South Australian Environment Protection Authority. Available online at http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/epa/pdfs/cdl_survey.pdf. Link checked Feb 2005.

Zero Waste South Australia. *Container Deposit Legislation (CDL) fact sheet*. Available online at http://www.zerowaste.sa.gov.au/pdf/ZWSA_406015_CONTAINER.pdf. Link checked Feb 2005.

Institute for Sustainable Futures (2001). *Independent Review of Container Deposit Legislation in NSW*. Prepared for the Hon Bob Debus, NSW Minister for the Environment. Available online at http://www.isf.uts.edu.au/CDL_Report. Link checked Feb 2005.