

Inquiry - Improving Queensland's Container Refund Scheme

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Submitted by: Koala Action Inc.
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Submitter Comments:

When Queensland introduced Containers for Change, giving 10c for every drink bottle and can returned for recycling it was a great win for our volunteer not for profit incorporated association, designated as a charity. This provided funds to help plant koala food trees and other natives in parks, reserves and open spaces. The funds helped volunteers rehabilitate existing bush land thereby increasing its carrying capacity. Koala Action Inc. is grateful for this fund-raising opportunity. Members are aware that an 85% return rate by 2022 was legislated but has not been achieved (it now sits at about 67%). There have been many benefits to this plant that include recognising that the scheme has been a great improvement on the previously low recycling rates and high litter amounts in the environment, but members believe this needs a significant upgrade. Tube stock costs \$1.50 at the lowest end of the purchasing options so the value of the 10c refund is clearly being eroded by inflation over time. KAI collects a large number of recyclable products, and members believe the refund should be increased to 20c or more to maintain and grow the incentive to recycle, not only for us but the community in general. It is also important to note that our members have indicated that there are too few return points and too many inconvenient ones. This should be relatively simple to address and resolve. If Australia is to capture some of the approximate 4 billion drink containers still being littered and landfilled per annum and achieve a recycling rate above 80% or 90%, these schemes need to become more attractive to consumers. The October 2022 HEPA consumer engagement analysis included the following, outlining that between 22%-35% of Australian consumers believed the refund value was too low; and an additional 18%-38% believed accessing the refund network was inconvenient. KAI posits these reasons should encourage the necessary changes to improve recycling rates and reduce littering on both land and water.