

Container Deposit Legislation: The Case of South Australia

South Australia first introduced a container deposit legislation scheme, basically a deposit – refund system, in 1977. (1) Since then South Australia has become the nation's leader in developing a successful deposit- refund scheme, which has garnered outstanding results both in the quantity of material being recycled, and also in the way the program has shifted residents' awareness and attitudes towards recycling.

The container deposit legislation scheme implemented in South Australia is a policy system that requires the collection of monetary deposits on containers at the point of sale. Then upon the container being returned at a redemption centre the deposit is refunded. Since 2008 a deposit and refund system of 10 cent per container has been active. (1)

Since the start of the scheme, South Australia has significantly seen a decrease in the volume of containers being littered. (1) In 2010 -2011 approximately 47,000 tons of containers were saved from being added to tip sites; instead these containers were returned for refunds. (1) South Australia sees an overall return rate of over 80%, which is greater, than any other state in Australia. (1)

South Australian residents overwhelmingly support the scheme; with 98% of respondents of a 2012 study, supported the program. (1) South Australian residents view the scheme as not only encourages recycling and reducing litter, but has benefited the state as the scheme has developed a new job market. Currently, over 600 people work within the recovery bottle sector, and community groups such as the Scouts operate container refund centres. (1) The operating of container refund centres provides a platform for community groups to garner a steady stream of income, which supports community development projects.

Cash for container scheme at the national level, which has been estimated to remove over 600,000 tons of container material, has been rejected. (2) Similarly; the Northern Territory introduced similar cash for container scheme as seen in South Australia, to only to have their legislation challenged and defeated by major beverage provider Coke Cola. (2)

It is evident that plastic waste is filling up both landfills and the world's oceans. It is clear that cash for container scheme benefits the environment; it is also clear from considering the South Australia system that the scheme benefits the community at large.

For further information on South Australia's container-recycling program please visit: http://www.epa.sa.gov.au/environmental_info/waste/container_deposit_legislation

References

[1] http://www.epa.sa.gov.au/environmental_info/waste/container_deposit_legislation

[2] <http://theconversation.com/national-container-deposit-scheme-crushed-by-australian-senate-9596>

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