CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND WASTE POLICIES

The Boomerang Alliance of 56 national, state and local groups proposes the following measures be included in the election platform for the upcoming Victorian Election.

CONTAINER REFUND SCHEME: 20 CENTS AND INCREASED SCOPE

- Increase the container refund to **20 cents** (if necessary, unilaterally to encourage other states) and **index the refund** to address future inflation.
- Review the effectiveness of container refund point arrangements to **ensure equitable access (quality and quantity)** for consumers and commit to transparent reporting of zone return rates.
- **Include other container items** as eligible in an expanded container refund scheme (wine and spirits, bottle tops (mandate to be tethered), other non-beverage plastic/glass containers and reusable containers).

REUSABLE PACKAGING STRATEGY: LEADING WITH REUSE AT STADIUMS & EVENTS

- Introduce **Reusable Packaging Regulation for Victoria** that includes requirements that major stadiums and large events provide reusable cups and containers as part of a reuse service.
- Implement **reuse foodware practices at all Victorian Government buildings and public facilities** and encourage reuse in other ‘controlled environments’ such as corporate offices, shopping precincts, in retail outlets and transport services.

SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL EPR WITH VICTORIA MAINTAINING ITS PLASTIC PHASE OUTS

- Support a **national, intergovernmental, mandatory Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme for Packaging** that includes mandated targets for reduction, reuse, better design, removal of harmful chemicals, recycling and recycled content. In the event that the Commonwealth does not act in time, announce a commitment that Victoria will continue via inter-governmental approach or introduce its own state-based scheme.
- Continue the **banning of single use plastic items** that are unnecessary or problematic causing litter, pollution and resource wastage, aiming to make Victoria a leader in this area.

ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES

- Oppose thermal **waste to energy** plants and restrict expansion of existing ones.
- Improve **circular economy legislation** (eg, NSW model) to enable product stewardship for items (eg batteries, cigarette butts, e-waste) causing pollution, resource wastage, uncontrolled fire or other danger or unable to be recycled or reused.
- Adopt a **microplastic reduction** strategy with compliance powers targeting the range of sources for elimination and pollution control; and regular monitoring of water, air, soil and foreshore environments.
- Continue to provide **funding for litter clean ups and macro and microplastic monitoring.**

MODERNISING VICTORIA'S CONTAINER DEPOSIT SCHEME

GLOBAL BEST PRACTICE

While the launch of CDSVic in 2023 was a positive step, data shows **the scheme is underperforming against Victoria's statutory recycling targets and global best practice** and will continue to deteriorate over time.

Recycling Vic's policy mandates an interim target of 72% diversion of waste from landfill by 2025, and 80% by 2030. We are falling short:

In FY25, only 44% of eligible containers were returned through CDSVic. Another 16% were recovered via MRFs. This left over a billion recyclable assets unaccounted for.
Many were buried in landfill and littered in parks and waterways.

To honour the Recycling and Resource Recovery Act, grow circular economy jobs, improve resource security and better support the charity sector, we urge the Victorian Government to modernise the scheme.

HARMONISE STANDARDS

National consistency means matching the highest environmental standards.
We urge Victoria to:

- **Expand Eligibility:** Include wine and spirit bottles (aligning with SA, QLD, NSW, NT and WA).
- **Reduce Littered Caps:** Mandate tethered caps to reduce waste and eliminate litter (aligning with NSW proposal and EU standards).
- **Equitable Access:** Improve CDS access across the three zones to enable easy participation by all Victorians.

Crucially, expanding eligibility is vital to a circular economy. By capturing missing materials, we directly align with the Government's goal to '**increase the quality and volume of recycling and reuse of our precious resources,'** rather than relying on volatile international imports.

Region	Container Refund Scheme			Containers Collected		
	Return Rate	Residents per site	Refund AUD equivalent	Wine & Spirit Bottles	Reusable	Tethered Caps
Germany	98%	642	€0.25 ~ 40c		Yes refills.	
Finland	95%	1,401	€0.15 ~ 40c			
Slovakia	94%	1,659	€0.15 ~25c	Wine bottles included	Not yet	
NSW	61%	12,977		Mid-Late 2027		By 2030
QLD	61%	15,671				
WA	59%	11,198		Jul 2026		
ACT	56%	21,374		Mid-Late 2027		
VIC	44%	11,510		No (Purple Bins Instead)		
SA	N/A	14,468		Mid-Late 2027		
NT	N/A	14,091		Jul 2026		
TAS	N/A	11,755				

MODERNISING VICTORIA'S CONTAINER DEPOSIT SCHEME CONT'D

> **85% of Australian voters support increasing the CDS refund amount.**
> ***Redbridge Group 2025***

UPDATE THE REFUND TO 20 CENTS + CPI

The 10 cent refund continues to lose its purchasing power. It's now two decades old (originally from SA) and it will continue to decline as an incentive for sufficient participation in the scheme. Domestic resource supply of plastic and our circular economy will continue to suffer.

Higher refunds guarantee high return rates.

Economic modeling shows that doubling the refund to 20c is the single most effective way to drive modern consumer behaviour and would lift container recycling rates **closer to 90%.** This will bring the country in line with global circular economy leaders like Germany, Finland and Slovakia, which offer higher deposits and successfully capture over 90% of their waste streams.
Germany has the world's largest and highest-performing deposit return scheme, achieving a record 98% return rate on eligible single-use drink containers with refund levels up to €0.25 (40c AUD equivalent). Finland (35c AUD equivalent) achieves a 92% return rate.

Locally, when South Australia doubled its refund to 10c in 2008, returns jumped from 69.9% to 80.1%, all with zero impact on beverage sales.

We urge Victoria to:

- **Double the refund:** Increase the Container Deposit Refund from 10c to 20c
- **Protect against CPI:** Commit to periodic, CPI-indexed reviews of the refund amount to ensure it maintains its effectiveness and is not eroded by inflation

Independent analysis by MRA Consulting confirms, a 20 cent refund will supercharge public participation, inject vital funding into Victoria's charity sector and build the circular economy.

The proposed 20c refund is supported by major businesses (eg, PACT, Cleanaway) and sectors (eg, ACOR) who will make further investments in the state.

Victoria has an opportunity to lead rather than wait for a lagging national consensus. We urge you to immediately support a **Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS)** to increase the refund to 20 cents, ideally in partnership with New South Wales, and expand container eligibility. When Victoria and NSW lead, the rest of the nation follows.

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Cost to Government: Modernising the scheme carries no financial burden for the Victorian Government. The CDS operates under an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) model, meaning the system is funded by the beverage producers themselves, not taxpayers.
Note: a government loan provided to assist the initiation of the scheme in 2023 does not need to be repeated.

The Cost-of-Living Impact: Individuals may claim doubling the deposit makes everyday drinks more expensive, but the price impact on consumers is completely neutral. Because this is a fully recoverable deposit, the connected extra cents paid at the counter goes straight back into the consumer's pocket the moment the container is returned. In fact, Redbridge Group data shows over 60% of participants view a 20c refund as a helpful cost-of-living buffer.

CDS EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY: SHIFTING THE FINANCIAL BURDEN

In the kerbside system, producer responsibility ends the second a drink is purchased.

Households carry the financial burden via ever increasing council rates.

A CRS shifts the accountability from households to producers under an extended producer responsibility scheme: producer responsibility continues until the empty bottle is successfully recovered.

This shift of responsibility is the 'hidden engine' of a CDS as producers are legally obligated to ensure their packaging is fully recovered.

Design Incentive: When producers are financially responsible for the end-of-life cost of their packaging, they are incentivised to make it easier to recycle.

Shifting the Sorting Risk: The producer's scheme operator handles the sorting. The high-quality, pure material they collect is then sold by the scheme to offset their costs. The more efficient the industry is at collecting and selling the clean material, the lower their overall costs become.

From 'Litter' to 'Product Stewardship': Traditionally, if a bottle ended up in the environment, it was a 'public nuisance' for the taxpayer to clean up. A CDS reclassifies that bottle as Industry Property.

COST TO GOVERNMENT

The industry pays for the actual recycling loop. For the government, expanding a CDS is a limited bureaucratic and regulatory expense, rather than infrastructure cost.

It does not cost taxpayers direct capital to build or run the infrastructure.

Private industry does the heavy lifting: the beverage industry is entirely responsible for funding the daily operations, paying out the refunds, and managing the recycling logistics.

Where the Government Does Spend Money:

1. Legislative and Legal Overhead
2. Stakeholder Consultation
3. Oversight and Auditing

Will Drink Prices Skyrocket?
No, the 20c is a fully retrievable deposit.

Unlike a tax, the extra 10 cents added to the price of a drink is completely recoverable. If you return the bottle, you get 100% of that money straight back into your pocket. Additionally, market research from previous deposit adjustments shows that a 10c price change has a negligible impact on overall consumer demand for drinks.

BOOMERANG ALLIANCE

> 83% oppose the introduction of purples bin. 91% support expanding the CDS to include glass wine and spirit bottles.
> *VIC statewide survey by 35 councils*[1]

CDS - NATIONAL HARMONISATION

Harmonising the CDS ensures that the circular economy can flow seamlessly across the nation without being choked by state borders.

Failing to harmonise systems creates major inefficiencies, costs, and risks.

A nationwide rollout to 20c ensures that borders don't face cross-state fraud (e.g., people driving truckloads of Victorian cans into South Australia to cash in on a higher rate).

Because every state historically had different timelines and rules, beverage suppliers face a logistical nightmare trying to print compliant labels.

If a small craft brewery in Victoria wants to sell its beer in New South Wales and South Australia, it often has to manage separate packaging lines or print a clunky, multi-state block of text on the back of the can detailing every single jurisdiction.

Harmonising the scheme means a single, universal 'Refund Mark' and barcode works identically from Perth to Brisbane, removing administrative barriers for businesses.

VICTORIA'S PURPLE BINS

A recent statewide survey led by 35 councils found overwhelming opposition to the proposed, purple-lidded glass-only bin, with 83% of respondents against its introduction. The survey also found that 91% support expanding the Container Deposit Scheme to include glass wine and spirit bottles.[1]

The purple bin creates a redundant, competing system. Residents are effectively being asked to pay higher council rates to have a glass bin at home (even if they are not using it!), while simultaneously being incentivised to take their most valuable glass containers (beer, cider, and soft drink bottles) to a CDS depot for a refund.

It makes little economic sense to run two entirely separate, multi-million-dollar collection systems for the exact same material.

Forcing households to manage four separate bins is a logistical nightmare for many living arrangements.

If the government expands the CDS, the beverage industry must pay for the expansion. But if the government forces councils to implement a separate purple bin, that cost falls squarely on local government and ratepayers.

1 Source: Media Release
https://www.campaspe.vic.gov.au/Our-council/News-media/Latest-news/Victorians-reject-costly-fourth-bin-for-glass-recycling

ACCESSIBILITY

Container refund schemes with high return rates typically utilise a 'return-to-retail' model. This framework legally mandates that any retailer selling beverages must also accept the empty containers, **ensuring maximum consumer convenience.**

In these systems, redemption is simple because it exists within the consumer's retail footprint, driving return rates that regularly exceed 90%.

Enhancing community access is essential because consumer behaviour is fundamentally governed by convenience. Transforming recycling from a chore into a daily habit requires a system that is entirely effortless for the user to navigate.

Ultimately, maximising community access is the foundational mechanism that ensures millions of eligible items are captured. This transforms a waste stream into a reliable, local resource loop that drives domestic manufacturing and powers Victoria's circular economy.

EQUITY

The reliance on volunteerism to combat pollution places an unfair and disproportionate burden on community groups.

Local environmental organisations essentially function as unpaid municipal workforces, stepping in to manage systemic waste failures. Beyond the physical toll, these groups must absorb the administrative and operational strain of organising events, securing public liability insurance, sourcing safety gear, and coordinating waste disposal.

In 2025, volunteers donated approximately 9,000 hours to participate in Victorian Beach Patrol cleans. During the year they collected:

- > 16,000kgs of waste
- > 22000 bottle caps
- > 20,000 containers

Companies flood the market with single-use packaging, knowing volunteer groups will quietly absorb the labour and cost of cleaning up. We need to shift from addressing the symptoms of a disposable packaging problem to fixing the cause.

Thats why policy interventions like 'return-to-retail' CDS schemes are so critical: they legally transfer the logistical and financial burden back to retailers and producers, reducing the need for community clean ups and stopping pollution at the source.

A BIGGER REWARD for A CLEANER AUSTRALIA

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