



FAMILY FIRST



Steve Fielding **Family First** Senator for Victoria

Senator Steve Fielding
Family First Leader

Second Reading Speech

Drink Container Recycling Bill 2008

13 March 2008

Family First is today introducing the *Drink Container Recycling Bill 2008* as an important environmental measure to boost the recycling of drink containers across Australia.

Only South Australia operates a container deposit scheme where there is a five cent container deposit that is redeemed when the container is returned for recycling.

Other state governments have been slow to act on this issue and Family First believes federal intervention is needed.

Ian Kiernan, Chair of Clean Up Australia, said this month that more than a third of the 7,200 tonnes of rubbish collected on Clean Up Australia Day was recyclable drink cans and bottles made from aluminium, glass, plastic and steel.

The volume of material collected on Clean Up Australia Day is also increasing. Last year the number of containers collected from parks, waterways and streets was up 12 per cent.

Obviously what Australia is doing now to recycle drink containers is not working. We need a national system that puts a value on used drink containers so they are recycled.

That's why Family First has decided to introduce legislation for a national container deposit scheme similar to the one operating in South Australia.

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South Australia is leading the way with container recycling at 85 per cent while the other states are bogged down in litter with an appalling recycling rate of 35 per cent. A national container deposit scheme makes sense – it's a big win for the environment and a big win for the community.

A national container deposit scheme is a big win for the environment because we end up with 25 per cent less litter in our streets and waterways and half a million less tonnes of waste every year as we will see container recycling lifted from 38 per cent to 85 per cent.

A national container deposit scheme is a big win for the community because we have a cleaner looking environment and local community groups and kids can earn some extra cash while keeping Australia beautiful. For example, last year in South Australia the Scouts earned \$7 million from container recycling

It is ridiculous to think that we don't have a national deposit recycling scheme in place already. Just last month I went for a walk along Melbourne's Yarra River and in under an hour collected five shopping bags of bottles and other containers from the river bank. With a national deposit scheme in place, this rubbish would be recycled rather than end up as rubbish polluting our waterways.

The cost of litter on our community is largely hidden. The cost of visual pollution, rubbish and loss of enjoyment from using public areas is not easily measured.

In our market-driven society, things that do not have a cash price are often not valued. But these are often the things that have most value to families and communities. A clean environment, the ability to enjoy a barbeque at the park with the family without unsightly rubbish, as well as active community involvement in keeping public areas clean are all important, but not recognised because they do not have an obvious monetary value.

Putting a cash value on rubbish can help to change that. In South Australia the state government has recently announced that the price paid for dropping each drink container off at a recycling depot will increase from five cents to 10 cents a bottle.

More easily measurable are the value of reducing landfill and cutting greenhouse emissions.

Recycling a plastic bottle saves more than 80 per cent of the energy used to make a bottle from scratch. Similarly, recycling aluminium cans uses just five per cent of the energy used making a can from scratch.

A national container deposit recycling scheme would save 300,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases a year.

That is equal to 40,000 homes running on 100 per cent green power.

A national drink container recycling scheme can save the average family \$30 every year on kerbside recycling and create more than 2000 new jobs.

The *Drink Container Recycling Bill 2008* provides for a system of drink container stewardship plans, where producers, distributors or industry groups must submit an approved plan to achieve a 75 per cent recycling rate within two years of the commencement of the plan and 80 per cent within five years. Distributors are included because they may be responsible for imported products not produced in Australia. The plans will be subject to public comment and the performance of the final approved plans tracked against performance requirements.

Producers will have to report annually on the performance of their plan and must complete a review of the approved plan within five years of its commencement.

Importantly, the bill uses a pollution prevention hierarchy to encourage producers to improve the environmental performance of their containers. Producers will have to detail in their plans how they will:

- reduce the environmental impact of producing beverage containers by eliminating toxic components and increasing energy and resource efficiency;
- redesign beverage containers to improve reusability or recyclability;
- reuse beverage containers;
- recycle beverage containers;
- recover material from beverage containers.

In January the man responsible for introducing South Australia's container deposit legislation in 1975, former Labor conservation minister Glen Broomhill, died. His is a lasting legacy that is an example of successful policy we should take up nationally.

A national drink container scheme is practical environmental policy where the effect of the policy can be seen relatively quickly, in cleaner streets, parks and waterways.

Family First is taking this important initiative as the state governments are dragging their feet on litter.