



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts Committee Report:

The Environment Protection (Beverage Container Deposit and Recovery Scheme) Bill 2009

February 2010

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Communications and the Arts Report:**

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Bill 2009**

This is the Australian Government's response to the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts Inquiry into the *Environment Protection (Beverage Container Deposit and Recovery Scheme) Bill 2009* (hereafter 'the bill') as tabled on 17 September 2009.

The Australian Government acknowledges the contribution of the Committee's inquiry to the Environment Protection and Heritage Council's ongoing consideration of this issue.

Context

On 17 June 2009, the Senate passed a motion requiring the Environment, Communications and the Arts Committee to inquire into and report on the bill. The Senate Committee tabled its final report on 17 September 2009 — *Environment Protection (Beverage Container Deposit and Recovery Scheme) Bill 2009*.

Introduction

The day-to-day management of waste is primarily the responsibility of the state, territory and local governments. The primary fora for harmonised action on waste issues of national significance are the Environment Protection and Heritage Council (EPHC) and the National Environment Protection Council. Through these fora, Australian environment Ministers seek to work within and across governments, and with industry and communities, to achieve effective, efficient and nationally consistent policies on waste in order to enhance social, human health, economic and environmental outcomes.

The EPHC has been investigating alternative mechanisms for increasing the recycling of packaging and decreasing litter, including container deposit legislation, since April 2008. In May 2009, the EPHC considered the results of an investigation into these options, the Beverage Container Investigation final report (available at: www.ephc.gov.au/news), and agreed to conduct a survey of the community's willingness to pay for improved packaging recycling and reduced litter.

At their meeting on 5 November 2009, the EPHC heard expert advice on the preliminary findings from the modeling study on the community's willingness to pay which indicated a high level of community interest in recycling packaging and reduced litter. The final study results were not available at the time of the EPHC meeting. Ministers will consider this report out of session with a view to making an evidence based decision on further work (if any) to address the community's desire to recycle more packaging and reduce litter.

At the same meeting the EPHC agreed to release a new national policy on waste and resource management. The National Waste Policy: Less Waste, More Resources (available at: www.environment.gov.au/wastepolicy) has a strong focus on taking responsibility, through product stewardship, to reduce the environmental, health and safety footprint of manufactured goods during and at end of life. It will also provide for flexibility in the way product stewardship schemes are implemented. A key priority will be for the Australian Government to establish national product stewardship framework legislation, in consultation with states, territories, industry and the community. Public consultation on the design of the legislation will occur during 2010.

The policy charts the vision for resource recovery and waste management to 2020. Developed with regard to relevant COAG agreements and with the support of industry and key non government organisations, it provides for collaboration to deliver effective approaches to domestic waste issues and aligns our waste management with Australia's international obligations.

The policy sets out a comprehensive action agenda across six areas: taking responsibility; improving the market; pursuing sustainability; reducing hazard and risk; tailoring solutions and providing the evidence. It will complement action on climate change and sustainability. Any decision to implement a national container deposit scheme would need to be consistent with the principles and directions laid out in the National Waste Policy: Less Waste, More Resources.

Response to recommendations

Recommendation	Position	AG Comment
Recommendation 1 The committee recommends that the EPHC advance its analysis of container deposit schemes without delay, ensuring that any further modelling draws on data derived from existing container deposit schemes and includes consideration of the model outlined in this bill.	Agreed	The Australian Government is committed to working through the EPHC to develop an evidence base on which to make a decision regarding further work to address the community's desire to recycle more packaging and reduce litter. Should the EPHC decide to proceed with further work, existing container deposit schemes, and the model outlined in this bill will be taken into account.
Recommendation 2 The committee recommends that the bill not be passed at this time.	Agreed	The Australian Government agrees that there is currently insufficient evidence to assess the merits of the proposed container deposit legislation and that a decision to implement such a scheme would not be appropriate at this time.