

Media release



Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection
and Minister for National Parks and the Great
Barrier Reef

The Honourable Steven Miles

It's official: You can get money back for your drink container, but no more plastic bags

Queenslanders can look forward to cleaner parks, beaches and public areas as the state now has a container refund scheme and a ban on plastic shopping bags ready to start next year.

Environment Minister Steven Miles said the *Waste Reduction and Recycling Amendment Bill 2017* that introduces Queensland's container refund scheme and plastic shopping bag ban was passed by State Parliament today (5 September 2017).

"These initiatives will stop the scourge of plastic shopping bags, and put a price on beverage containers so they get recycled.

"Many of the most passionate advocates for these reforms are Queensland school children. I get letters every day from school kids around the state.

"By passing this Bill we say to our young people that we value our wildlife, especially our marine creatures like turtles, sea birds and dugongs.

"We say that we want our parks, our waterways, Moreton Bay and the Great Barrier Reef to be litter free.

Mr Miles said the *Waste Reduction and Recycling Amendment Bill 2017* passed through Parliament with bipartisan support.

"This reflects the overwhelming community support for both the refund scheme and the plastic bag ban which will both come into effect on July 1 2018."

The container refund scheme will see most drink containers between 150ml and 3 litres eligible for a 10 cent refund (although some containers are exempt, such as containers for plain milk, wine and pure juice).

Refunds will be available when empty eligible containers are returned to designated container refund points across the state. Reverse vending machines are likely to play a significant role in people's ability to access the refund.

CEO of Waste Recycling Industry Association (Qld) Inc, Rick Ralph, said the association strongly supported the introduction of the scheme.

"The introduction of this scheme gives every Queensland access to a recycling system for used containers," Mr Ralph said.

"Until now unless you have a kerbside collection system recycling in remote and regional areas has been very limited.

"That limitation will be removed, enabling new jobs and greater community engagement through a CRS system.

“It will make such a tremendous difference to the environment.

“The next time we think about throwing away our drink containers we can think again, knowing there’s a better way, and now we’re paid to do it!”

Similar container refund schemes have been operating in South Australia and the Northern Territory for many years, with New South Wales to bring in a refund scheme in December this year.

Similarly, bans on lightweight single-use plastic shopping bags are already in place in other parts of the country including South Australia, the Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania.

“Drink cans and bottles dominate litter in our parks, beaches and public areas, while we use almost a billion lightweight single-use plastic shopping bags in Queensland each year, none of which are recyclable.

“Some 16 million of these bags end up as litter each year, greatly harming our marine wildlife such as turtles and sea birds that ingest or become tangled in them.”

Toby Hutcheon, representing the Boomerang Alliance and Wildlife QLD, said their groups were delighted the bill had passed into law.

“We have been working closely with the Queensland Government in the lead-up to this Bill being passed to ensure these two initiatives work to slash container litter rates and dramatically increase recycling on a sustainable financial basis.

“The ban on all lightweight single use plastic bags-including degradable and biodegradable bags, and will significantly reduce the threat they pose to wildlife.

“The introduction of these two measures represent the most significant policy on litter reduction in a generation.”

Mr Miles said he applauded the initiative of retailers who were proactively banning the supply of lightweight plastic shopping bags in advance of the ban commencing on 1 July 2018.

Mr Miles said the State Government would continue to work closely with beverage manufacturers, retailers, local government, the waste and resource recovery industry, and the community on both proposals to ensure a smooth transition and operation of the container refund scheme and plastic bag ban.

More information on these initiatives is available at www.ehp.qld.gov.au/waste (<http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/waste>).

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