

Wave of support as Coast aims for world record on recycled bottles and cans

A Cash for Containers scheme similar to South Australia is being considered by the Queensland Government and Gold Coast locals will support the concept by aiming to make the world's biggest surfboard out of recycled litter at Currumbin on Saturday (April 23).

Operating in more than 40 countries, the eco-initiative has gained the support of State Member for Currumbin Jann Stuckey MP.

"Cash for Containers is supported by more than 85 per cent of Queenslanders and most local councils throughout the state and the initiative is deserving of a thorough review," said Ms Stuckey.

"Recycling options like this could bring favourable benefits for our electorate, our community groups and our state.

"I am pleased to join the Cash for Containers crew this Saturday alongside Gold Coast Scouts to unveil the world's biggest surfboard sculpture made entirely out of recycled litter in an effort to highlight this innovative project."

A Cash for Containers scheme would see a 10 cent refundable deposit on all beverage bottles and cans and will slash litter rates while creating jobs for the Coast, according to Boomerang Alliance Queensland manager Toby Hutcheon.

"The New South Wales Government is proposing to start a container deposit scheme mid- 2017 and Queensland should join in," said Mr Hutcheon.

"We estimate the scheme could provide more than \$25 million to community organisations every year while slashing litter rates, increasing recycling, creating jobs and boosting community fundraising.

"Apart from being the most effective way to reduce container litter, it also has the added advantage of providing a massive financial boost to community organisations interested in collecting cans and bottles.

"Our campaign in Australia has led to NSW planning to introduce the scheme in 2017. We are now advocating that Queensland join the scheme. The State Government is currently investigating options and we are expecting the release of a public discussion paper shortly."

Research shows Queensland as the most littered state in Australia, with rubbish rates 40 per cent higher than the national average and only 18 per cent of plastic bottles recycled – while Queenslanders use more than 1.6 billion bottles and cans ever year.

The report, 'Queensland's Plastic Pollution Crisis, Container Deposit and Other Solutions' examines the sources and rate of litter, micro-plastics and impacts on marine life and solutions.

Mr Hutcheon said a cost-effective Cash for Containers model in Queensland could operate sustainably without government funding.

“It’s a win-win situation and presents a perfect state and local government partnership which engages the community and keeps our highly regarded natural tourism assets beautiful,” he said.

Data from South Australia shows Cash for Containers slashes litter and dramatically increases recycling. It also shows that with a 10-cent deposit about 80 per cent of people participate in the scheme by returning containers. The unredeemed deposits help fund the system.

Boomerang Alliance will join forces with Gold Coast Scouts at Elephant Rock, Currumbin Beach (next to Viking surf club) on Saturday (April 23) where the world’s biggest surfboard will be created from recycled litter. Some of the materials to be used were collected by the campaign from Gold Coast beaches, parks and waterways during the recent Clean up Australia Day campaign.

About Boomerang Alliance

The Boomerang Alliance was formed in 2003, and is a community-based NGO campaigning on litter reduction, particularly plastics, with the aim of a zero waste society. Our current focus is marine pollution and debris, particularly plastic pollution. We are advocating for a container deposit (cash for containers) scheme in Queensland and a restriction on the use of plastic packaging, particularly plastic bags.

Fast (and filthy) Facts

- According to a Newspoll (2015) 85% of Queenslanders support a cash for containers scheme.
- In Australia, 30 million bottles and cans are landfilled or littered every day. That’s 21,000 every minute
- In Queensland, we use more than 1.6 billion bottles and cans ever year. Most, less than 40% generally and less than 20% away from home, are wasted. In South Australia, more than 80% of all bottles and cans are recycled.
- According to the National litter Index, QLD has the highest litter incidence in Australia with 72 items per 1000 m²-41% higher than the national average.
- As a result of a cash for containers scheme being introduced, it is expected that as many as 500 new jobs in Queensland could be created in recycling and collection.
- More than 80% of consumers redeem the deposit and return containers, the remaining 20% of unredeemed deposits pay for the system or are claimed by others.
- It is estimated that community groups could claim over \$25 million from deposits and handling fees in Qld.
- In South Australia, 12% of items in recycling bins are containers, giving councils the opportunity to redeem deposits

For more information: www.boomerangalliance.org.au