



## Better Container Deposit Legislation for WA

The Over 55 Cycling Club's submission to the discussion paper on the WA container deposit scheme  
22<sup>nd</sup> October 2017

The WA government has announced that container deposit legislation will be introduced to start in January 2019. A discussion paper is at [www.der.wa.gov.au/cds](http://www.der.wa.gov.au/cds).

There is a window of opportunity to have a much broader look at the options for container deposit legislation and the advantages in expanding the concept from just reducing landfill and increasing recycling to a genuine whole of government approach.

We would like to request that as well as the normal emphasis on reducing volumes going to landfill, that there is also a clear emphasis on reducing the dangers that broken glass poses to cyclists and as well to bare-foot children. Bike riders are quite often forced to swerve out around patches of broken glass in bikelanes and beside the kerbs in traffic lanes. This can be very hazardous if a vehicle is overtaking at that moment. As well, punctures from broken glass are a significant disincentive to all cyclists, reducing the health benefits of the physical activity of cycling and reducing bicycle transport usage.

We have four significant suggestions on how future WA legislation may be substantially improved over that in other states.

- (a) **The level of container deposits should be set by regulation**, so it does not require returning to Parliament for future increases, for instance to allow for inflation. A failing of the original 1975 South Australian Container Deposit Scheme was that the deposit of 5c was not increased (to 10c) until 2008. The real value of the original 5c deposit in 1975 has risen with inflation to 34c now.
- (b) **There should be provision in the legislation for differential deposits on different container materials**, also set by regulation, not in the legislation. Glass containers should attract a deposit and a handling fee at least double that of containers made of non-lacerating materials such as aluminium, plastics and cardboard.
- (c) **The deposit and handling fee collected on containers which are not returned should be allocated towards cleaning roads, paths and parks of broken glass and unreturned containers**. The eastern states model incongruously allows the beverage makers to retain the deposit on unreturned containers. They profit every time a bottle is broken or sent to landfill.
- (d) **Wine and spirit bottles should be included in the CDS, not exempted**. Green glass from wine bottles is not uncommon on urban roads, and some rural and remote communities have significant problems with discarded wine bottles

If a future container material that is biodegradable and environmentally benign becomes available, then it should be able to be allocated a deposit lower than the existing plastic, aluminium and cardboard materials.

It is important that WA gives some serious thought to the proposed legislation, rather than blindly following existing Australian models which are far from ideal. In particular, the hidden costs of the externalities, like those from broken glass, should be fully considered in a whole-of-government approach to a container deposit scheme.

A more information on our suggestions is detailed in the document below.

We ask that the Government introduce a multilevel container deposit scheme, with the aim of substantially reducing the amount of broken glass in our parks and on our beaches, roads and bike paths.

Yours sincerely

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## Broken Glass: Dangerous for Cyclists The Case for Differential Container Deposit Legislation

The WA Government has announced plans to introduce beverage container deposit legislation. We recommend a differential deposit system to substantially reduce the proportion of glass in the beverage container stream. We suggest an initial 10 cent standard deposit (as proposed by the WA Government in line with other states) but a higher, 20 cent, deposit on glass containers. This would greatly reduce the amount of broken glass on our roads and beaches.



SA chose to lead other states in 1975, and there is no need for WA to merely follow what other states are doing by having a uniform 10c deposit on all containers. We could choose to lead Australia, as SA did in 1975.

### **Left: Broken glass in a bike lane in Mosman Park**

What is the cost of a cyclist being hit by a car while avoiding a patch of broken glass in a bike-lane?

Proposals for container deposit legislation in WA are aimed almost entirely at reducing landfill and

increasing recycling. This is admirable, but ignores the serious extra hazards that broken bottles pose compared to other non-lacerating container materials

From the point of view of cyclists and bare-foot children, there is a quantum difference between containers made of lacerating material (glass) and those of innocuous materials (cardboard, aluminium or plastic). A discarded squashed aluminium can on a road can be picked up and recycled.



A glass stubby thrown on a road produces jagged fragments and thousands of razor-sharp shards of glass, which cannot easily be removed and which result in punctures and in danger to cyclists.

Most cyclists seeing a patch of glass on the road or in the bike-lane will swerve out to miss the glass. This can be very hazardous if time does not permit one to check effectively for overtaking vehicles. Hence there is an important need for far higher deposits on lacerating container materials than on child-safe and bike-safe container materials

### **Left: A patch of small puncture-size fragments in another bike-lane. This is the most common scenario facing cyclists**

Ideal legislation would allow the imposition of differential deposits on different container materials by regulation, without needing to go back to Parliament. For instance, if there is a novel biodegradable container material developed which will turn to compost if left in the grass by

the side of the road, it should attract a lower, or zero deposit. The containers made of lacerating container materials (glass) should be able to have a higher (say twice as high) deposit.

In WA, glass cannot be recycled into new glass bottles. It can be shipped to the nearest glass factories, in Adelaide, Sydney or Singapore, but the costs and transport energy required mean this is often impractical or counter-productive. Glass can be used as an aggregate supplement in the base of new roads, but the sharp shards will resurface when the road is next reconstructed.

The aim of a differential deposit scheme is to shift purchases from containers made of glass towards those of non-lacerating materials, and to make it worth people taking the six-pack of empty stubbies back for a refund rather than discarding them on or beside the roads or in parks or on beaches

The original 1975 South Australian container deposit legislation required a 5c deposit on bottles. However, to increase the deposit from the original 5c was difficult, so it has only been raised once, in 2008, to the current 10c, much less than the real 34c value now of the South Australian government's original initiative.

It would be far better if any future WA legislation allows for reviews and changes to the value of the deposits by regulation without having to go back to Parliament, so the deposit levels can be updated far more easily to keep pace with inflation, or even increased if need be. For instance, wine bottles are currently intended to be deposit-free. There is a good case for including wine and spirit bottles in those requiring a deposit. This would be far more simply done by regulation than having to amend legislation.

**The Over 55 Cycling Club urges the WA Government to introduce differential container deposit legislation, aiming initially for say a 10c standard deposit and a 20c deposit on dangerous glass containers.**

**What is the cost of a child maimed by jumping on a broken bottle, or a cyclist badly injured by a car while avoiding a patch of broken glass in a bike-lane?**

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*The Over 55 Cycling Club has over 350 members who together travel over half a million rider kilometres each year on club rides and many more kms travelling to rides and on informal rides.*

*Our members are aged from 55 years to over 80 years (more than 20 of our octogenarian members are still riding). Clearly cycling is very good for physical and mental health, (outweighing by 20 to 1 the health risks from crashes) This is of growing importance in times of declining community fitness and health levels.*

*Our club organises rides on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Mondays in Perth, often with over 100 riders participating. We ride single-file in small groups, rather than en-mass. There are groups suitable to beginners and intermediate riders as well as for more advanced cyclists. There are also O55 clubs in Busselton, Albany and Mandurah.*