

‘Can-do’ – reverse vending machines offer rewards for recycling

The City of Sydney is trialling new ‘reverse’ vending machines that provide small rewards to people depositing empty plastic bottles or cans into a machine.



Credit: City of Sydney

The new units, located at Circular Quay and Haymarket in Sydney’s CBD, are designed to encourage visitors and locals to dispose of their drink containers responsibly. The machines can hold up to 2000 containers each before they need to be emptied. They dispense coins, other small rewards or a charity donation.

Around 15,000 bottles and cans are thrown away as litter or into landfill every minute across Australia. Clean-Up Australia figures show beverage containers account for over one-third of all reported rubbish in NSW.

Sydney Lord Mayor, Clover Moore, said only about 42 per cent of bottles and cans are recycled annually in NSW, and the City was working hard to raise that figure through a range of new initiatives.

Apart from contributing to pollution, broken glass bottles cause around 40,000 injuries in Australia every year, with around 5000 of these injuries requiring medical treatment.

The City is calling for the introduction of a national container deposit scheme as a long-term, sustainable solution to the problem. Around the world container deposit schemes have produced record recycling results. South Australia’s scheme has achieved recycling rates of up to 90 per cent – double the rate of NSW.

‘Container deposit schemes significantly increase recycling, reduce waste and protect wildlife and the environment from plastic pollution,’ the Ms Moore said.

‘We’re taking what action we can to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill, but will continue to lobby state and

federal governments for reform on this issue.'

Clean-Up Australia founder and Chairman, Ian Kiernan AO, is committed to action in the war against rubbish, working with the community, government and business to provide practical solutions for more sustainable lifestyles.

'In 2013 beverage containers and their associated rubbish made up 41 per cent of the total rubbish and 59 per cent of the top ten rubbish items reported by volunteers in NSW. This was an increase of 3 per cent over 2012,' Mr Kiernan said.

'This is a serious problem. We need better ways to capture these containers, turning them from rubbish into a resource. The cleanest and most accessible solution we have seen is the reverse vending model.'

Source: City of Sydney

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