2025

THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

ELEVENTH ASSEMBLY

ACT Container Deposit Scheme 2024-25 Annual Report

Presented by
Tara Cheyne MLA
Minister for City and Government Services
December 2025

ACT CONTAINER DEPOSIT SCHEME

RECYCLING THAT MAKES CENTS

24/25

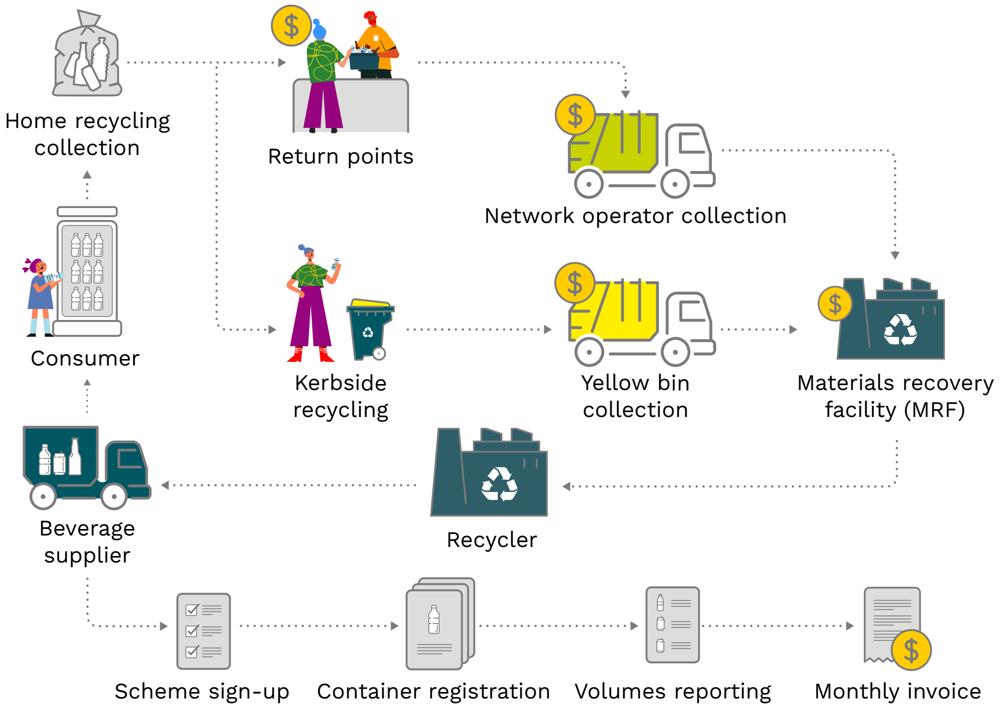
Annual statutory report

Exchange FOR CHANGE

Contents

About the ACT Container Deposit Scheme

The ACT Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) is an example of extended producer responsibility. Individuals, families and community groups can take their eligible beverage containers to a return point and receive a 10c refund per container. Beverage suppliers fund the scheme, including the container refunds and scheme operating costs.



The scheme is delivered through a partnership of the following organisations.

Scheme regulator – ACT Government

The ACT Government's ACT NoWaste team is responsible for developing the scheme and managing the obligations and performance of contracts with the scheme coordinator and network operator.

Scheme coordinator – Exchange for Change

Exchange for Change (EfC) is contracted to provide financial management, scheme auditing, fraud identification, verification, community education and marketing services. A key part of the scheme coordinator's role is managing suppliers and ensuring supplier funds are paid into the scheme.

Network operator – Return-It

Return-It is contracted to set up and manage a territory-wide network of return points, and manage the logistics and sale of commodities to ensure all collected containers are recycled.

Other participants

First suppliers

As the scheme is funded by the beverage industry, any businesses selling beverages in containers or giving them away as part of a promotion, whether manufacturers, distributors, wholesalers or retailers, must enter into a supply agreement with EfC, register any eligible containers and report their supply volumes monthly. They then pay for every eligible container they supply into the ACT to cover the cost of collection including the 10c refund paid to consumers when redeeming a container.

Material recovery facility operators

The current material recovery facility (MRF) operator is registered with the ACT and can claim processing refunds for eligible containers collected through kerbside recycling bins.

Consumers

Essential to the ACT scheme's success has been the support and participation of the ACT public, community groups and charities, who regularly return their eligible drink containers at a return point in exchange for 10c a container.

CASE STUDY

Kingsford Smith School students lead on recycling and reap the rewards

What started as a maths class exercise turned into a fundraising opportunity that is getting students at Kingsford Smith School excited about recycling.

Science and maths teacher Tim Kirsopp set his class a problem to determine how much money the school was throwing away in eligible 10c containers each year. The idea took off, with students recognising the potential of their bottles, cans and cartons to make money by recycling through the ACT CDS.

“Every day, 50 kids might bring a juice popper to school. That’s five dollars that can easily be made every day,” said student Byson.

The school now has six dedicated bins collected by an ACT CDS mobile collection service each week.

Students can use their ACT CDS container refunds to fund extracurricular activities. So far, they have purchased two costumes for the school’s lion dancing troupe and supported the school’s Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEMIES) team to travel to Adelaide for the national STEM Innovation Experience (STEMIE) ‘speedway’ competition.

“Container refunds were a big help. That was a quarter of the money needed to get to Adelaide,” said student Ezekiel, who is a STEMIES team member.

With students reaping the rewards of ACT CDS participation, the school has seen great engagement from students, who are not only placing eligible containers in the correct bins but also encouraging one another to do the same.

Kingsford Smith School students lead on recycling and reap the rewards.

Return points in the ACT

As at 30 June 2025

6
Drop & go pods

- Amaroo District Playing Fields
- Charnwood Shopping Centre
- Hawker Shops
- Kambah District Playing Field
- RDOC* Gungahlin
- RDOC Tuggeranong

*Recycling Drop Off Centre

5
Drop & go points

- IGA Evatt
- IGA Farrer
- IGA Nicholls
- Vinnies Belconnen
- Vinnies Tuggeranong
- *Salvos Fyshwick* *(closed as of December 2024)*
- *Salvos Phillip* *(closed as of December 2024)*
- *Salvos Tuggeranong* *(closed as of December 2024)*
- *Vinnies Dickson* *(closed as of December 2024)*

4
Cash-back depots

- Belconnen
- Fyshwick
- Mitchell
- Phillip

2
Reverse vending machines (RVM)

- Erindale Shopping Centre
- Weston Creek

1
Donation station

- Australian National University

Return point types

Drop & go pods

Self-service and open 7am to 7pm, seven days a week.

Ideal for a small number of bags of containers. Electronic refund only.

Refund types	Donations
Electronic refund	Yes

Drop & go points

Self-service and staffed. Open during business hours and weekends.

Ideal for four to five bags of containers at a time. Electronic refund only.

Refund types	Donations
Electronic refund	Yes

Cash-back depots

Staffed with automated counting systems. Open during business hours and weekends.

Ideal for larger quantities of containers and offers an instant cash refund, with electronic refund also available.

Refund types	Donations
Cash	Yes
Electronic refund	

Reverse vending machines

Self-service and open 7am to 7pm, seven days a week.

Ideal for returning containers close to home. Electronic refund only.

Refund types	Donations
Electronic refund	Yes

Donation station

Self-service and open 6am to 12am, seven days a week.

Ideal for on-the-go returns – donations only.

Refund types	Donations
Donations only	Yes

Where does the material go?

As an ACT Government litter reduction initiative, the ACT CDS ensures eligible drink containers returned through the scheme are diverted from landfill and the litter stream for recycling.

Bottles, cans and cartons returned through the return point network are particularly highly valued, as they form a clean stream of recyclable material, free of contaminants.

As the network operator, Return-It is contractually obliged to ensure all containers collected through its return points are recycled. It does this in the following ways:

- 100 per cent of glass containers collected are reprocessed in NSW to produce new glass bottles and glass packaging products.
- 100 per cent of polyethylene terephthalate (PET) containers collected through the network are sold and recycled in NSW and Victoria.
- 100 per cent of high-density polyethylene (HDPE) containers collected through the network are sold and recycled in NSW and Victoria to produce flake and pellet, which is on-sold as feedstock to make other products.
- 100 per cent of aluminium collected through the network is baled and sold via local traders to overseas markets for smelting to produce new containers and other products.
- 100 per cent of liquid paper board (LPB) collected through the network is sold in Australia to recyclers or exported for remanufacturing.

Chair's foreword

Increasing the volume of containers returned is a core focus for container deposit schemes nationwide. I was excited to see the team lean into this challenge by working with some of Australia's best behaviour-change researchers. Partnering with Monash University's BehaviourWorks Australia, Exchange for Change has applied the latest behavioural science theory and six years of consumer research data to develop and launch the new and vibrant 'Recycling that makes cents' campaign this year.

The team spent time understanding what motivates people in the ACT to return their containers and the barriers. This revealed that people are motivated to help the environment, teach their grandchildren how to save and, my personal favourite, 'do the right thing'. However, we understand that people have a lot on their plates, and this can get in the way of returning containers. Our new campaign addresses this by showing how easy it is to incorporate recycling through the ACT CDS into everyday routines.

It has been wonderful to see this message roll out across Canberra, from brightly coloured bus and tram rear panels, to mentions on ACT radio and the nightly news. While it is still early days, we are seeing signs of success with participation reaching its highest levels at the end of this year.

And of course, as more people participate in the scheme, the positive environmental, economic and social benefits also grow.

The social benefits of the scheme are often not as obvious as the environmental impact, but we know that the ACT CDS is a valued fundraising source for many ACT charities and not-for-profit organisations, with the dual benefit of keeping containers out of landfill.

I am inspired each time I hear how the community uses the scheme to support amazing causes. Stories range from Kingsford Smith School students recycling to fund a school trip, to 12-year-old Keira Naden raising money to represent Australia at the World Jump Rope Championships in Japan, and the Canberra Centre's launch of the first 'return for charity' digital smart bins in an ACT shopping centre.

Canberra Centre is a great example of how an organisation can use the scheme to support others. The return for charity bins have created a simple way for shoppers to turn eligible bottles and cans into support for local causes. Currently, the refunds from containers collected via the bins go to Roundabout Canberra – a charity that helps families doing it tough by providing essential items like cots, prams and highchairs. It is a powerful reminder that every container returned through the ACT scheme can help support those most in need.

We know the ACT Government is considering the scheme's future purpose, including possibly expanding it to other containers. The EfC Board and team are ready to provide support and insights to ensure this is done successfully.

We are at an exciting time in the scheme's evolution. Working together with the ACT Government, Return-It, the beverage industry and community members, EfC is proud to contribute to a future where sustainability is top of mind and driving the circular economy.

Tracy McLeod Howe
Chair
Exchange for Change

CASE STUDY

Canberra Centre: recycling for a cause with 'return for charity' bins

Canberra Centre has taken a leap forward in sustainability, with the launch of new 'return for charity' bins turning eligible bottles and cans into funds for local charities – a first for an ACT shopping centre.

The Canberra Centre partnered with ACT CDS and network operator Return-It to introduce these smart bins. Each bin features a barcode scanner and only opens when an eligible ACT CDS container is scanned.

Once the bins are full, Canberra Centre staff book a pickup with an ACT CDS mobile collection service. The service is available to any business, organisation or individual in the ACT with more than 300 containers to collect.

Customers can return eligible drink containers to the smart bins, with all container refunds collected by the Canberra Centre being donated to support local charities.

"This initiative not only helps to reduce waste but also makes it simple for our customers to give back to the community," said Clare Glassford, Services Manager of Canberra Centre.

For the launch of the new bins, Canberra Centre partnered with Roundabout Canberra, a local charity that provides essential baby gear such as cots, prams and highchairs to families in need.

"We are proud to partner with Roundabout Canberra, ensuring that every small donation contributes to a larger cause, helping local families in need," said Clare.

The Canberra Centre return for charity bins are located in the Lower Ground Food Court and in Coles Mall.

Two return for charity bins were installed at the Canberra Centre to allow shoppers to donate their refunds to local charity, Roundabout Canberra.

CEO's message

It has been wonderful to see the ACT community's strong enthusiasm for the scheme during the last 12 months, and it is a sign that Canberrans are increasingly embracing sustainability. I had the pleasure of working at our ACT CDS information stand at the National Multicultural Festival this year. Here I saw firsthand people's excitement at participating and heard countless stories about how they are using the scheme to save for special occasions, family holidays and everyday expenses.

With almost three-quarters of the community having participated in the scheme, returning over 405 million containers through the return point network since the scheme began, the ACT CDS demonstrates the positive impact that extended producer responsibility schemes can deliver.

This year, the small but mighty scheme has achieved one of the strongest redemption rates in the country, outperforming similar schemes in other states. While the ACT community's enthusiastic participation undoubtedly drives this success, it is also possible because of the beverage industry's participation in paying for every container supplied into the ACT to be collected and the 10c deposit paid to consumers.

When the ACT scheme launched seven years ago, there were only two other container deposit schemes in Australia. NSW, which launched six months earlier, and South Australia which has been around for some time. Today, it is a very different story with every state and territory in Australia having its own container deposit scheme. This is great news for the environment, but we acknowledge it means greater effort for beverage suppliers selling drinks in multiple jurisdictions.

I am proud of EfC's work this year, leading a national working group of other scheme coordinators to identify ways to make participation for beverage suppliers easier. We will progress this work in the year ahead including improvements to make monthly reporting easier.

I was also pleased to attend a one-day workshop with our colleagues from the ACT Government and Return-It to review the scheme's success to date. Importantly, we discussed ways to make the scheme even more successful, including strategies to increase participation and redemptions.

Currently, two in every three containers supplied into the ACT are returned through the scheme for recycling into new containers and other products. We are keen to capture the remaining third of containers and I look forward to some innovative trials and partnerships in the year ahead to collect these missing bottles and cans.

Thank you to our scheme colleagues at the ACT Government and Return-It, and the entire EfC team, supported by our Board, for all your collaborative efforts throughout the year.

It has been a big year for the ACT scheme, with new volume records set, and the highest levels of support and participation ever. It is a strong foundation to build on, and I cannot wait to see what we achieve in the next 12 months.

Danielle Smalley
Chief Executive Officer
Exchange for Change

> **The scheme achieved one of the strongest redemption rates in the country**

Return-It CEO's message

2024–25 has been a landmark year for the ACT Container Deposit Scheme (CDS), with the program surpassing an incredible 405 million containers returned via the return point network since its inception. This milestone reflects the continued support for the ACT CDS operations and the growing commitment of the community to sustainability and responsible recycling.

Our depots at Mitchell and Phillip each exceeded 80 million containers since the commencement of the scheme, setting new daily, weekly, and monthly records throughout the year. These achievements are a testament to the dedication of our teams and the enthusiasm of ACT residents.

Collaboration has been key to our success. We are proud of our strong partnerships with the ACT Government and the scheme coordinator, Exchange for Change. Their support and strategic guidance have been instrumental in driving performance and expanding our reach.

We've also built robust relationships with industry stakeholders to support major events, including Closed Loop at Floriade and the Enlighten Festival, Quay Clean at GIO Stadium, and Wilclean at Summernats. These partnerships have helped us integrate CDS into the fabric of Canberra's cultural life.

In 2024-25, we onboarded six new Express charity partners, enabling more community groups to benefit from container donations. Additionally, four new POD sites will come online in the new financial year, further enhancing accessibility and convenience for all Canberrans.

Looking ahead to 2025–26, our focus will be on deepening community engagement, expanding infrastructure, and leveraging technology, we remain committed to innovation, collaboration, and delivering measurable environmental benefits with a relentless focus on our customers.

Marc Churchin
Chief Executive Officer
Return-It

> "We remain committed to innovation, collaboration, and delivering measurable environmental benefits"

2024–25 scheme performance

Priorities

The following sections detail the scheme's achievements in each of these areas.

Priority 1
Customer excellence

Priority 2
Sustainable operations

Priority 3
Industry participation

2024–25 scheme highlights

Priority 1

Customer excellence

Delivering a seamless customer experience through public awareness, community engagement and easy access to return points.

18
return points[1]

88%
awareness[2]

91%
support[2]

82%
trust[2]

74%
participation[2]

81%
satisfaction[2]

1. As at 30 June 2025.
2. Percentage of ACT residents (aged 18+), Instinct and Reason, June 2025, consumer research.

Priority 2

Sustainable operations

Ensuring efficient and sustainable delivery of operations for the scheme.

2024–25:
159 **million containers**
supplied into the ACT[3]

2024–25:
109 **million containers**
collected through the scheme

2024–25:
69%
annual redemption rate

Since commencement:
1.07 **billion containers**
supplied into the ACT[4]

Since commencement:
684 **million containers**
collected through the scheme

Since commencement:
64%
redemption rate

3. After adjusting for exports.
4. After adjusting for exports. Refer to page 25 for an explanation of supply and export volumes.

Priority 3

Industry participation

Working together with stakeholders and industry to ensure scheme integrity and safety.

882
supply arrangements in force

$25.5 **million**
in supplier contributions paid in 2024–25 (excluding GST)

$3.01 **million**
in materials recovery facility processing refunds paid in 2024–25 (excluding GST)

ZERO
safety incidents[5]

5. Reported by EfC in 2024–25.

Year in review

Scheme partners ended the year celebrating seven years of success for the ACT CDS, record high participation and one of the strongest redemption rates in the country.

Recycling that makes cents

An engaging new advertising campaign launched during the year, showed residents how to make recycling through the ACT CDS part of their routine. Based on extensive research into the drivers and barriers to scheme participation for current and non-participants, the campaign appeared on radio, free-to-air television, bus backs, social and digital channels, and even a tram.

Record returns through the network

It was another strong year of growth for redemptions through the return point network, with a record 77 million containers returned. New monthly and weekly volume records were also set over the summer with a staggering 7.65 million containers returned in January and 2.02 million in a week that month.

All four cash-back depots also set new records in December and January for the most containers returned at each return point in a month. Mitchell depot achieved the highest volume, with 2 million containers returned in a month, closely followed by Fyshwick with 1.87 million containers.

Presence at major venues and events

Scheme partners again focused on implementing container collections at major ACT venues and events. Nearly 400,000 drink containers were collected from GIO Stadium Canberra and at major events, including Floriade, the National Multicultural Festival, the Royal Canberra Show and Summernats.

In addition to ensuring these containers are recycled rather than ending up in landfill, ACT CDS collections outside the home helped encourage scheme participation by reinforcing the message that CDS containers have value and are not waste.

Scheme coordinator extension

In accordance with the ACT's *Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act 2016*, the ACT Government extended EfC's contract as the scheme coordinator for another three years, effective from 29 March 2025.

Harmonisation

Work continued on a harmonised 'portal' for container approvals that could be used across all Australian CDSs. The national working group is led by the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) with the ACT Government a member and attending numerous workshops throughout the year.

EfC also worked closely with scheme coordinators in other jurisdictions to identify opportunities to reduce the effort for suppliers participating in multiple schemes. Harmonised supplier audits continued with the addition of the Tasmanian scheme to the harmonised audit process.

The ACT CDS stand saw over 1,000 visitors at the annual Royal Canberra Show in February 2025.

CASE STUDY

Canberra Park: making recycling easy for visitors

Introducing ACT CDS recycling bins to group accommodation and caravan park operator Canberra Park in September 2023 has made a positive impact – returning nearly 35,000 bottles, cans and cartons for recycling, and raising nearly $2,500 for charity.

Operations Coordinator Christopher Annett said the park's journey began with dedicated bins near the tourist accommodation, to collect eligible drink containers for the ACT CDS. Six months later, additional bins were added in the group accommodation area.

The containers are picked up weekly by a mobile container collection service and taken to the Mitchell Cash-Back Depot. Canberra Park receives a 7c refund per container, which it donates to children's charity Camp Quality.

Christopher said it has been easy to implement container recycling at the park, and he recommends all businesses use the ACT CDS.

"It's an easy way to do something for the community and for the environment – there's no reason not to do it."

The 35,000 containers returned for recycling equate to saving 2,400 kilograms of waste from landfill and avoiding 5,000 kilograms of carbon emissions.

Canberra Park has had a good response from guests who are keen to recycle their empties, and it's been an opportunity to engage children from the schools that use the park's group accommodation.

"The kids get bottles of water with their meal packs, and previously they were just throwing them in the bins, so we wanted to help educate them about recycling," said Christopher.

Canberra Park had nearly 35,000 drink containers returned, and raised almost $2,500 for charity.

Our commitment to sustainability

We are pleased to report on the ACT CDS sustainability impacts, which align the scheme's outcomes with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDGs are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere.

While we acknowledge the importance of all 17 SDGs, we have prioritised five that closely align with our mission and purpose. This table summarises the contributions of the ACT CDS to these five SDGs.

Goal	Target	Progress
4 QUALITY EDUCATION **Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.**	**4.7** By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.	The ACT CDS contributes to sustainability education by engaging schools, charities and community groups to show how participating in the scheme can achieve this goal. The scheme provides valuable information to individuals and groups about the benefits of recycling and reducing waste in landfill. EfC continued to provide free teaching resources on sustainability and recycling for Early Learning to Year 6, available for download on the ACT CDS website. The resources were reviewed and updated in early 2025 to align with the latest national curriculum and two new lesson plans for high school students were added. The resources were downloaded 56 times by ACT educators.

Goal	Target	Progress
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION **Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.**	**6.4** By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of fresh water to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity.	The ACT CDS supports more efficient water use by facilitating the manufacture of new drink containers from recycled materials rather than virgin materials that use significantly less water. In 2024–25, 77 million drink containers were recycled through the ACT CDS return point network, delivering environmental benefits equivalent to water savings of nearly 515 million litres. This is equivalent to 206 Olympic swimming pools of water based on the life-cycle assessment of the network developed by Lifecycles Australia.
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH **Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.**	**8.8** Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.	Scheme partners prioritise compliance with work health and safety, and other labour laws. They lead by example in striving to create a safe and secure working environment for their staff, contractors and the public.
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES **Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.**	**11.6** By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management.	By reducing litter, landfill waste and the reliance on virgin materials, the ACT CDS plays an important role in minimising the environmental impact of humans. In 2024–25, 69 per cent of containers supplied into the ACT were redeemed through the scheme. In total, 109 million drink containers were returned through the scheme for recycling (via the return point network and kerbside collection).
12 RESPONSIBLE GROWTH AND CONSUMPTION **Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.**	**12.2** By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources. **12.5** By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and re-use.	The ACT CDS plays an important role in the ACT circular economy by ensuring that materials are reused or recycled into new drink containers and other products. This reduces the need for new virgin materials and reduces waste. 100 per cent of glass, PET, HDPE, aluminium and LPB returned through the network was reused or recycled into new drink containers and other products in Australia and overseas.

Priority 1: Customer excellence

18
return points[6]

88%
awareness[7]

91%
support[7]

82%
trust[7]

74%
participation[7]

81%
satisfaction[7]

Recycling through the ACT CDS is now a regular part of life for residents. Scheme participation reached record highs in the year, and CDS collections have become commonplace at major events and venues.

6. As at 30 June 2025.
7. Percentage of ACT residents (aged 18+), June 2025, consumer research conducted by Instinct and Reason.

EfC partnered with the ACT Government's Sustainable Schools program to engage students on the ACT CDS, including a visit to Turner Primary.

Public education and awareness

EfC launched a major new campaign to increase participation in the scheme. The ACT CDS 'recycling that makes cents' campaign was developed following extensive research into the motivations, drivers and barriers to scheme participation undertaken in partnership with Monash University's behaviour-change research team at BehaviourWorks.

The campaign, which launched in February 2025, shows how recycling through the ACT CDS can be easily incorporated into everyday routines. During the five months it was live, the campaign ran on bus rear panels, trams, radio and television, as well as online. By the end of June 2025, half of ACT adults recalled seeing it.

Consumer research completed in June 2025 found that trust, support and satisfaction with the CDS remained strong throughout the financial year, with more ACT residents (43 per cent) saying they would recommend it to someone they know (up 5 percentage points on June 2024).

Participation in the scheme also reached a record high, with nearly three in four ACT adults having participated, including a significant increase in participation among inner Canberra residents. Encouragingly, over half of participants reported returning more containers through the scheme than last year.

Engaging schools to increase participation

Supporting schools in engaging young people to reduce waste and recycle is an important step towards embedding behaviour change from a young age and contributing to a more sustainable future for the ACT.

EfC conducted a pilot with six schools to identify ways to make it easier for schools to participate in the CDS. It resulted in the development of an ACT CDS school starter pack with key assets to support schools' implementation of onsite collections and broader fundraising through the scheme. The starter packs will roll out in 2025–26.

The ACT CDS school resources were also updated to ensure alignment with the new national curriculum, and two additional lesson plans were added to support high school students' engagement with the scheme.

Access and convenience

Canberra Centre celebrated the launch of two new 'return for charity' bins during the year, the first of their kind in an ACT shopping centre. Located in the Lower Ground Food Court and Coles Mall, the two smart bins enable Canberra Centre customers to return their eligible bottles, cans and cartons, with the refunds from these containers going to support local charities.

While three partner-hosted return point locations closed during the year, discussions were well advanced by year-end on the introduction of four new drop and go pods, due to go live in July 2025.

Supporting community

Throughout the year, we continued to support charities and community groups to fundraise through the scheme. We refreshed the fundraising page on the ACT CDS website to make it even easier to access information on how to get started. A new fundraising fact sheet was developed with information on how to sign up to the different account options. The factsheet was translated into the five most common languages other than English in the ACT (Vietnamese, Korean, traditional and simplified Chinese, and Arabic) to support diverse community participation.

A new series of community case study videos was also created and promoted throughout the year to inspire other groups.

Return-It updated its digital terminals at pods and depots to enable more charities to be listed as donation partners. By the end of the year, the number of charities featured had increased to from six to 21.

Overall, donations throughout the year raised $61,338 for charities and community groups, contributing to the $306,655 raised since the scheme began.

Engaging with Canberrans at events

Scheme partners enjoyed engaging with the ACT community at major events. Our information stands gave locals the opportunity to learn about the scheme's benefits, which containers are eligible for a 10c refund, what happens to containers once returned, and how to get started.

Highlights of the year included the National Multicultural Festival, ANU Orientation Week and the Royal Canberra Show.

Return-It also continued its focus on capturing eligible containers at major events and venues through partnerships with venue waste and cleaning services. Event collections resulted in more than 399,000 containers being recycled, including:

- 44,949 containers at Floriade 2024
- 244,156 containers at GIO Stadium Canberra (2024 and 2025 NRL seasons)
- 12,603 containers at the National Multicultural Festival
- 8,173 containers at the Folk Festival 2025
- 15,476 containers at Enlighten 2025
- 74,446 containers at Summernats 2025.

ACT CDS information stand at the National Multicultural Festival in Canberra, February 2025.

CASE STUDY

Closed Loop supports local charities at Floriade

Sustainability company Closed Loop transformed waste management into a success story again this year at Canberra Floriade. During the month-long event, its team implemented onsite container recycling. An incredible 44,979 bottles and cans were diverted from waste, raising $4,497.90 for Roundabout Canberra and the Indigenous Marathon Foundation (IMF).

Roundabout Canberra supports families in need by providing essential items for babies and children. IMF is a health-promotion charity that uses running and physical activity to support the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

National Operations Manager at Closed Loop, Bridget Davis, said container recycling ran smoothly, with purple ACT CDS bins clearly labelled and positioned in visible locations for attendees to use.

"Closed Loop also hand-sorts additional bottles and cans from the co-mingled recycling bins, and other waste streams where they have been incorrectly disposed of," Bridget added.

"The ACT CDS continues to be a huge success at events in the ACT. Because of this, a considerable donation was raised for local charities, and event patrons can be confident that their event waste is ending up in the best possible place to be recycled."

Closed Loop operates across Australia and New Zealand, managing waste at many major events. By using initiatives like ACT CDS, the company saves waste from landfill through recycling, donating or reusing.

Closed Loop recycles and supports local charities at Canberra Floriade.

Priority 2:
Sustainable operations

159 **million containers** supplied into the ACT[8]

109 **million containers** collected through the scheme[8]

69% **annual redemption** rate of total containers supplied

8. Net of exports

The ACT CDS has one of the best return rates in Australia. It has been another strong year for the ACT scheme with new records set for returns via the return point network, contributing to a significant increase in the scheme's overall redemption rate compared to last year.

Supplier contributions

Supplier contributions are based on fixed prices by material type, using detailed cost modelling to forecast scheme costs for each pricing period. Surpluses or shortfalls at the end of a period feed into future pricing adjustments.

Two pricing periods applied during 2024–25. A new fixed price by material type, announced in October 2024, took effect for 12 months starting with February 2025 invoices.

The actual weighted average cost per container for the year remained within 4 per cent of the average of the two published prices during the period.

Scheme pricing in 2024-25

Table 1: Actual pricing summary by material type

Pricing	Pricing period 1 (cents)	Pricing period 2 (cents)	Average price per container 2024–25 (cents)
Aluminium	15.50	16.36	15.93
Glass	13.95	13.14	13.55
HDPE	8.50	11.10	9.81
PET	10.90	13.07	11.99
LPB	4.92	6.67	5.80
Steel	2.46	3.36	2.91
Other plastics	1.39	1.75	1.57
Other materials	1.43	1.86	1.65
Weighted average	**12.95**	**13.99**	**13.47**

Prices are in cents, excluding GST. Weighted average price per container is calculated by applying the monthly set prices to actual volumes divided by the total volume for the year. Prices are based on reported volumes at the time the August 2025 invoice was generated.

Supply volumes

In 2024–25, suppliers delivered 3.1 million more containers into the ACT than the previous year.

The ACT serves as a distribution hub for eligible drink containers across the Territory and nearby parts of NSW. Businesses that purchase containers in the ACT and supply them to other jurisdictions can claim a rebate under the ACT CDS Export Protocol. Throughout 2024–25, export volumes accounted for 14 per cent of the gross supply into the ACT.

Despite the steady export proportion, net supply volumes increased by 1.6 per cent. The most supplied material types were aluminium, which grew by 6 per cent, and PET, which grew by 2 per cent. After adjusting for exports, aluminium, PET, and glass accounted for 92 per cent of the total containers supplied into the ACT.

Supply volumes

Table 2: Actual supplier volumes net of exports, 2024–25

Container material type	Total	Volume share (%)
Aluminium	72,340,010	45.4
PET	48,328,727	30.3
Glass	26,163,220	16.4
LPB	10,462,996	6.6
HDPE	1,616,220	1.0
Steel	211,432	0.1
Other materials	196,716	0.1
Other plastics	18,541	0.0
Total	**159,337,862**	**100.0**

Volumes are actual supplier volumes net of exports. The volumes are based on reported volumes at the time the August 2025 invoice was generated.

Scheme redemptions

In 2024–25, consumers redeemed 8 million more containers than in 2023–24, bringing the total to 109 million containers. The average redemption rate increased to 69 per cent, four percentage points higher than in the previous year, primarily due to increased volumes redeemed through kerbside recycling.

The return point network collected 77 million containers (70 per cent of the total), while kerbside recycling contributed 32 million containers (30 per cent). Aluminium, PET, and glass remained the most redeemed material types, together making up 97 per cent of all containers. Redemption volumes largely mirrored the material supply profile, with PET and aluminium increasing and glass declining compared to the previous year.

> The average redemption rate increased to 69 per cent, four percentage points higher than in the previous year

Total scheme containers redeemed

Table 3: Total scheme containers collected through the network and material recovery facilities, 2024–25

Container material type	Net supply volume	Redeemed volume	Redemption rate (%)*
PET	48,328,727	36,786,459	76
HDPE	1,616,220	1,185,033	73
Aluminium	72,340,010	51,468,788	71
Glass	26,163,220	17,579,131	67
LPB	10,462,996	2,337,645	22
Steel	211,432	18,729	9
Other plastics	18,541	0	0
Other materials	196,716	0	0
Total	**159,337,862**	**109,375,785**	**69**

Note: Redemption rates are based on the supplier volumes reported in Table 2.
*Redemption rates have been rounded to the nearest whole per cent.

CASE STUDY

Pickleball ACT is giving recycling their best shot

In the past five years, Pickleball ACT has grown from five to 900 members, and as the club has expanded, so too has its waste and the need to fundraise. That is why President Michael Thompson had the idea to fundraise through the ACT CDS using the club's discarded bottles, cans and cartons.

"The waste side of things was something that annoyed me a lot when I saw everything going in the big skip out the back," said Michael.

Now, each week, the club's containers are collected by an ACT CDS mobile collection service. This service means the club receives a 7c refund for every eligible container collected, after a 3c service fee is applied for each container.

The club is putting its refunds towards replacing its broken balls, which it currently go through quickly.

"It's actually quite a cost to the club, so if we can get more and more people recycling and putting the proceeds towards the club, it actually really helps us out," said Michael.

The Pickleball ACT committee is now looking at how it can expand its fundraising efforts with the ACT CDS by becoming a donation option on screens at return points, to give their members the opportunity to donate to the club when visiting a return point.

Pickleball ACT is giving recycling their best shot.

Network trends

By June 2025, returns through the return point network had exceeded 405 million containers since scheme commencement. In 2024–25, 77 million containers were returned through the network, an increase of 2 million or 3 per cent compared to the previous year.

The network recorded its highest summer volumes to date, with 21 million containers returned between December 2024 and February 2025. The network redemption rate also improved, reaching 48 per cent for the year, up 0.5 percentage points year-on-year.

Aluminium, PET, and glass continued to be the most redeemed material types, accounting for 96 per cent of all network collections. PET increased by 1.5 million containers, and aluminium increased by 0.6 million containers. Glass declined by 0.2 million containers. The shifts in material types redeemed through the network align with the changes in the container material types supplied into ACT during the reporting period.

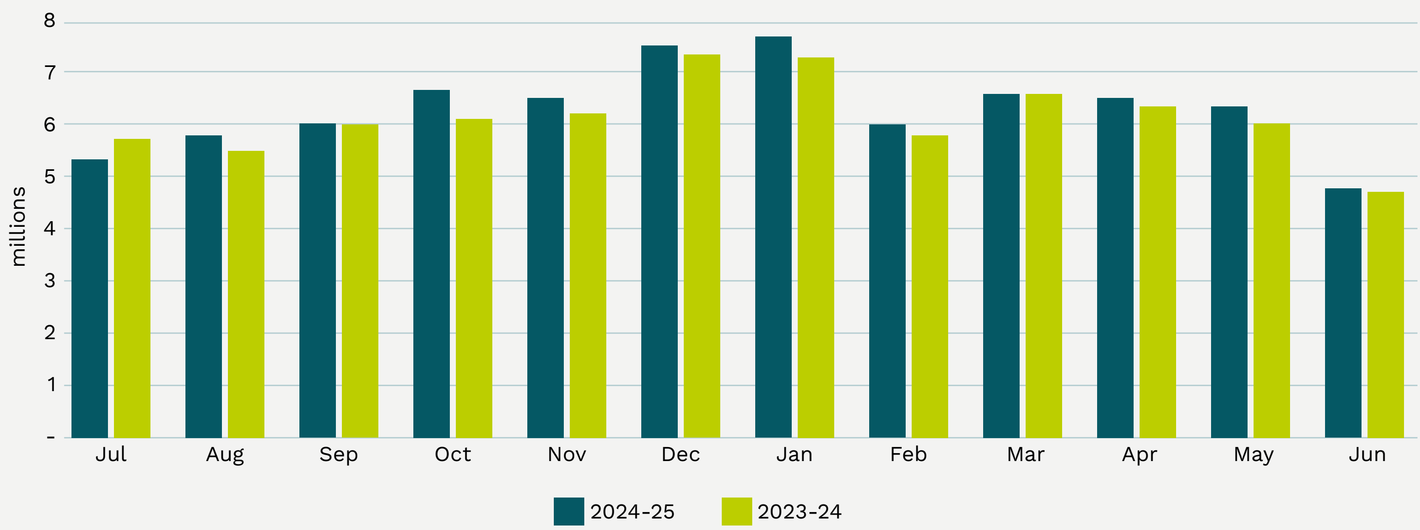
Network trends

Table 4: Total number of containers collected at return points, 2024–25

Container material type	Net supply	Containers collected through network	Redemption rate (%)*
Aluminium	72,340,010	40,403,391	56
Glass	26,163,220	13,190,550	50
HDPE	1,616,220	801,285	50
PET	48,328,727	20,245,736	42
LPB	10,462,996	2,337,645	22
Steel	211,432	18,729	9
Other plastics	18,541	0	0
Other materials	196,716	0	0
Total	**159,337,862**	**76,997,336**	**48**

Note: Redemption rates are based on the supplier volumes reported in Table 2.
*Redemption rates have been rounded to the nearest whole per cent.

Graph 1: Return-It's monthly redemption performance, 2024-25 vs 2023-24



Environmental impact of network redemptions

Using the lifecycle assessment undertaken by Lifecycles Australia, the environmental benefits of collecting and recycling the containers returned through the network to date compared to producing drink containers from virgin materials are:

Carbon emission reductions equivalent to:

Since commencement

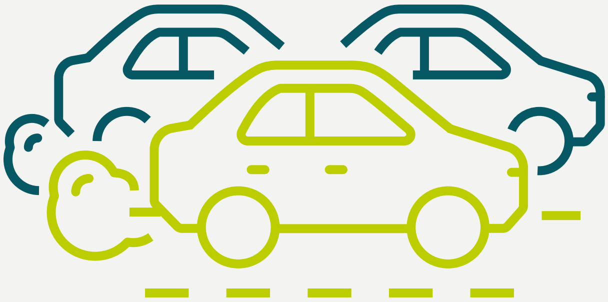
21,731

cars off the road for a year

2024-25

4,132

cars off the road for a year



Energy savings equivalent to:

Since commencement

5,024

households average annual energy consumption

2024-25

955

households average annual energy consumption

Water savings equivalent to:

Since commencement

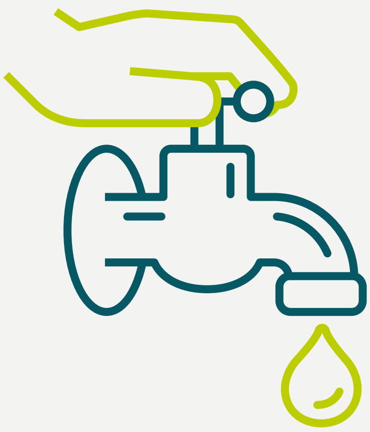
1,083

Olympic swimming pools

2024-25

206

Olympic swimming pools



Materials recovery facility trends

Over the 2024–25 period, the scheme used specific conversion factors—called eligible container factors—to estimate how many individual drink containers were collected based on the total weight of materials processed. These factors, outlined in the CDS Processing Refund Protocol and Sampling Plan, allow the scheme to convert tonnage into container counts, which are then used to calculate the payments made to the MRF for its recycling efforts.

Under scheme protocols, the system recognises containers recovered through kerbside recycling only after they have been delivered for reuse or recycling. This creates a timing gap between collection, processing and recognition.

In 2024–25, the MRF redeemed 32 million containers, an increase from 27 million the previous year. The mix of materials redeemed via the MRF also shifted. The redemption of PET containers rose from 24 per cent in the previous year to 34 per cent, and redemptions of aluminium containers increased from 13 per cent to 15 per cent. Redemptions of glass containers declined from 21 per cent to 17 per cent.

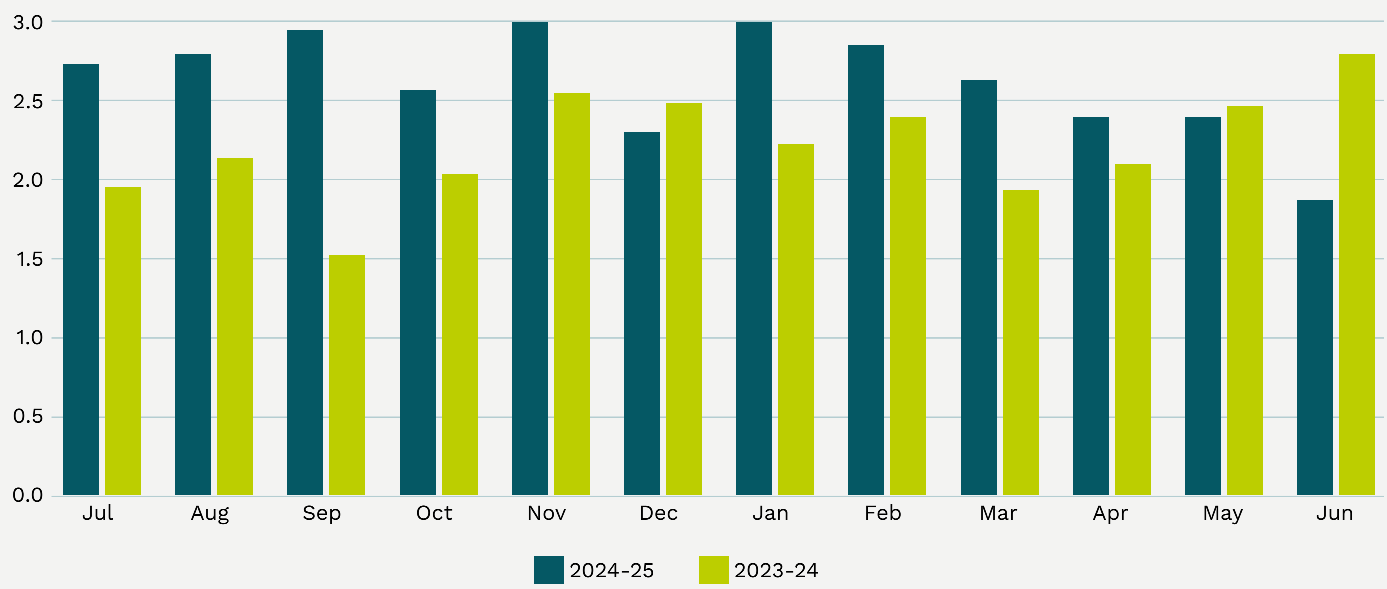
Materials recovery facility trends

Table 5: Materials recovery facility operator container redemptions, 2024–25

Container material type	Net supply volume	Containers redeemed through MRF	Redemption rate (%)*
PET	48,328,727	16,540,723	34
HDPE	1,616,220	383,748	24
Glass	26,163,220	4,388,581	17
Aluminium	72,340,010	11,065,397	15
LPB	10,462,996	0	0
Steel	211,432	0	0
Other plastics	18,541	0	0
Other materials	196,716	0	0
Total	**159,337,862**	**32,378,449**	**20**

Note: Redemption rates are based on the supplier volumes reported in Table 2.
* Redemption rates have been rounded to the nearest whole cent.

Graph 2: Materials recovery facility redemptions, 2024–25 vs 2023–24



CASE STUDY

Canberra skipping champ turns bottles and cans into boarding pass for Japan

Twelve-year-old Keira Naden is proof that recycling can take you a long way – all the way to Japan, in fact.

Keira, a member of Canberra's Jazzy Jumpers rope-skipping team, was preparing to represent Australia at the 2025 World Jump Rope Championships, held in Kawasaki in July. Keira and her family chose a hands-on fundraising approach: collecting bottles and cans to redeem through the ACT CDS for 10c refunds.

"When I qualified for Japan, we thought it would be a good idea to do container recycling to help raise money. We posted on Facebook to ask if anyone had spare bottles and cans, and lots of people replied. We pick up their containers and they update us when they have more," said Keira, who is in Year 7 at Amaroo School.

"It started with a post on a local 'buy nothing' Facebook page and grew from our neighbourhood to Canberra-wide. We live in Gungahlin and drive as far as Tuggeranong to collect containers," said Keira's mother, Stacey.

Some weeks' hauls were better than others, with Keira and her family usually taking their collections to the ACT CDS Cash-Back Depot in Mitchell once a fortnight.

By late June, they had raised $2,000 from collecting 20,000 containers. It was enough to cover Keira's airfare and contribute $500 towards the club to support other participants.

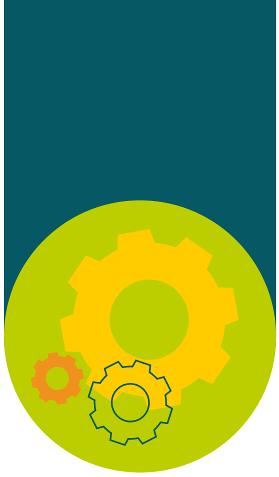
Stacey said that once they had enough for Keira's ticket, funds were to be put towards supporting other Jazzy Jumpers' travel.

"I like how it doesn't go to landfill so it's also good for the environment – and it's easy."

Canberra skipping champion, Keira Naden recycling with the ACT CDS for trip to Japan.

Priority 3:

Industry participation



882
supply arrangements
in force

$25.5 million
in supplier contributions
paid in 2024–25
(excluding GST)

$3 million in MRF
processing refunds
paid in 2024–25
(excluding GST)

With the launch of Tasmania's Recycle Rewards scheme in May 2025, a CDS is now operating in every state and territory in Australia. Throughout the year, EfC and the ACT Government actively participated in multiple forums to identify ways to harmonise the supplier experience and make scheme participation easier for industry.

Suppliers and exporters

First suppliers

First suppliers of beverages into the ACT pay for the costs of managing, administering and operating the ACT CDS including the 10c deposit refund to consumers.

During the reporting period, 882 supply arrangements with beverage suppliers were in force, including 86 new arrangements signed during the year, while 68 suppliers left the scheme. These arrangements outline beverage suppliers CDS obligations, which they are required to meet if they supply eligible drink containers into the ACT.

Suppliers collectively paid $25.5 million in contributions in 2024–25 (excluding GST).

Exporters

Some businesses buy eligible CDS containers in the ACT and sell or supply them to another business outside the jurisdiction. These businesses are treated as exporters under the scheme and can claim a rebate for these containers as they won't be collected in the ACT.

During the reporting period, 11 executed Exporter Deed Polls were in force, and one exporter made claims totalling $3.8 million (excluding GST) in rebates.

Supplier and exporter satisfaction

Scheme partners continue to work together to make participating in the ACT scheme as easy as possible for beverage suppliers. Yearly customer satisfaction surveys with suppliers guide ongoing improvement activities throughout the year.

In 2024–25, 63 per cent of suppliers rated meeting the reporting requirements of the ACT scheme as ‘easy’ or ‘very easy’. Satisfaction with the service provided by EfC increased slightly to 73 per cent.

Audit

EfC partnered with independent auditor PKF Australia Limited (PKF) to deliver the supplier and exporter audit program, ensuring impartial oversight separate from EfC and its shareholders. The audits verify reported supply volumes and contributions to the scheme.

Using a risk-based approach, EfC audits high-volume suppliers frequently and low volume suppliers less often. PKF provides quarterly reports, enabling EfC to follow up and resolve discrepancies between reported and audited volumes, supporting confidence in total ACT supply figures.

During the reporting period, PKF conducted 37 supplier audits of more than 146 million supplied containers and two export audits of more than 22 million exported containers.

All suppliers cooperated with EfC in closing any adverse audit findings, and no serious or material non-compliance notices were issued during the reporting period. Common themes causing first supply reporting errors included manual reporting processes, staff turnover, misinterpretation of first supply responsibilities, and incorrect treatment of returned containers.

Audits continued to be harmonised across jurisdictions, including New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, Victoria and, recently, Tasmania, resulting in efficiencies for the schemes and suppliers.

Harmonisation

Work continued in 2024–25 on a unified portal for container approvals across Australian CDSs as a Heads of Environmental Protection Authority (HEPA) project led by the NSW EPA. The ACT Government and EfC both had opportunities to provide input into the project.

Work also continued on harmonisation opportunities across several scheme transactions, audit processes, operation agreements and the systems in use. This work will continue into 2025–26.

MRF operator

Processing refunds

EfC paid $3 million (excluding GST) in processing refunds to the ACT MRF operator, ReCycle Operations, in 2024–25 for the first three quarters of the financial year and the last quarter of the previous financial year due to timing differences in claim lodgement after the quarter.

EfC conducts quarterly audits of claims and related source data to validate them before processing the refund, and to detect, manage and mitigate the risk of fraud and corruption.

No serious or material non-compliance notices were issued during the reporting period.

Network operator

Network payments

Return-It operates the return point network in the ACT and manages the logistics and sale of commodities to ensure all collected containers are delivered to a recycler. EfC administers the payments to Return-It, ensuring they are based on the total volume of eligible containers collected through the network. In 2024-25, the total payments to Return-It was $15.2 million including $8.2 million in network payments and $7 million in scheme refunds.

EfC's audit program validates the volume of containers claimed throughout the year, including the total volumes collected, counted and delivered for reuse or recycling, and Return-It's financial records to substantiate claims.

No serious or material non-compliance notices were issued throughout the year.

Return points

EfC monitored and analysed return point data throughout the year in accordance with the ACT Government–approved audit plan. If a specific risk was identified, onsite inspections were conducted.

No serious or material non-compliance notices were issued during the year.

Governance

Strong governance and effective risk management are critical to achieving the scheme's purpose. EfC remained focused on maintaining robust frameworks, supported by clear policies, systems and processes to effectively meet the expectations of the community, industry and regulators.

No performance failures or safety incidents were reported during the year.

Risk and assurance

EfC continued to enhance the scheme's governance and risk management in collaboration with scheme partners. Key activities in the period included updates of the:

- Crisis Management and Crisis Communication plans
- Business Continuity Plan
- Audit Plan
- Risk Register.

EfC also met quarterly with the scheme partners to review the risk register and discuss the scheme's control environment.

During the reporting period, the independent scheme auditor, RSM Australia, undertook detailed periodic audits of EfC's risk and assurance activities. The audits found that EfC was 100 per cent compliant with the Audit Plan.

Fraud and corruption control

Scheme partners are committed to ensuring the integrity of the ACT CDS, and trust in the scheme with no tolerance for fraud and corruption.

EfC maintains a robust operational fraud control plan to prevent, detect and respond to potential fraud and corruption issues. This plan assists EfC in mitigating the risk of fraud and corruption by using the principles of the Australian Standard on Fraud and Corruption Control (AS 8001:2021), a leading best practice model in Australia.

No material instances of fraud or corruption resulting in loss to the scheme were identified during the reporting period.

Health, Safety and Environment

EfC remains committed to a safe and sustainable workplace, aiming for zero material incidents and reducing safety risks wherever possible. Our independently certified Work Health and Safety Management System, which is aligned with ISO 45001:2018 (Occupational Health and Safety Management System), continued to be implemented across our operations.

Each scheme partner manages its own safety risks, with Return-It responsible for network-wide safety. EfC ensures a consistent, collaborative WHS risk approach guided by Safe Work Australia and overseen by the scheme's independent auditor.

No material health, safety or environmental incidents were recorded in the reporting period.

Data governance, security and confidentiality

EfC maintained a robust cybersecurity environment to safeguard confidential and personal data across EfC's systems and network. Key activities included:

- independent audits of IT security, backup systems and operational processes, including an independent assessment against the Australian Signals Directorate's Essential Eight maturity model. EfC was found to be at level one maturity and close to achieving level two
- maintaining a cybersecurity program with regular updates and ongoing threat monitoring to proactively address potential vulnerabilities
- penetration testing to identify and then fix any potential vulnerabilities.

No material data or confidentiality breaches occurred during the reporting period.

Looking ahead to 2025–26

Scheme partners look forward to delivering another year of high volumes and scheme participation by the ACT community as they build on the successes of 2024–25.

Increasing participation and redemptions

Increasing recycling rates of eligible drink containers in the ACT will continue to be a priority for scheme partners in 2025–26.

The return point network will expand at the start of the year with the introduction of four new drop and go pods, helping increase the ACT community's access to and convenience of the scheme.

Exciting innovations will be explored to capture eligible drink containers that are consumed outside the home. These will include bin baskets and new partnerships with major venues and sporting organisations across the ACT, while the 'Recycling that makes cents' campaign will continue to drive participation by showing Canberrans how to incorporate the scheme into their existing routines.

> Increasing recycling rates of eligible drink containers in the ACT will continue to be a priority.

Supporting industry

With Australia now the only continent with a CDS operating in every state and territory, reducing the effort required for beverage suppliers to participate is more important than ever.

Working closely with other Australian jurisdictions, EfC and the ACT Government will continue to progress discussions within national working groups to harmonise the supplier experience and make scheme participation easier.

Based on feedback from beverage suppliers, EfC will upgrade its systems to streamline processes and improve the experience of participating suppliers. EfC will also continue to educate industry on the environmental, social and economic benefits of the scheme that beverage suppliers fund.

Contributing to a circular economy

All partners recognise the positive effects the ACT CDS has had on improving resource recovery, ensuring eligible drink containers are recycled and remanufactured, changing community behaviour and contributing to a circular economy.

EfC and Return-It will continue collaborating with the ACT Government as it considers expanding the scheme to accept additional containers such as wine, spirits and cordial containers, providing data and insights as needed.


ACT
CDS
Container Deposit Scheme
Partnering with
RETURN-IT
What can
I return?
2
the chute.

Appendix 1

2024–25 financials

ACT Container Deposit Scheme accounts

The financial management of the ACT CDS is based on a cost recovery model, which achieves a similar outcome to that of a not-for-profit model. The scheme coordinator receives a fixed fee to perform a number of duties, including acting as the trustee of the ACT CDS funds. The fixed fee forms part of the cost recovery model.

The scheme's accounts are independently audited each year to ensure the financial statements comply with Australian Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional requirements in Australia.

Breakdown of contributions and costs

Table 6 shows scheme contributions and costs for 2024–25. As the financial reports are prepared based on applicable Australian Accounting Standards, revenue and expenses are recognised net of GST. The following financial information has been prepared on an accrual basis.

Table 6: Scheme contributions and costs for 2024-25

Financial accounts	2024-25
Revenue (AUD)	
Scheme contribution	$25,347,706
Finance income	$229,874
Other income*	$287,916
Total revenue	**$25,865,496**
*Other income - MRF audit cost provisions.	
Expenses (AUD)	
• Scheme refunds (container deposits)	$6,999,758
• Network operator fees	$8,161,718
• Material recycling facilities' processing refund	$3,895,154
• Exporters refund	$4,122,737
• Scheme coordinator administration fee	$1,286,414
• Scheme marketing fee	$749,171
• Scheme compliance fee	$383,542
• Other	$267,002
Total expenses	**$25,865,496**
Profit for the period	**$0**

*Other - MRF audit cost provisions, bad debts, crisis management and redemption research project.

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