

Sartor presses on with plan for paid recycling

HEATH ASTON

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ENVIRONMENT Minister Frank Sartor will move NSW towards a paid recycling system, despite industry fears it could cost the state up to \$200 million.

Mr Sartor will gather with state environment ministers in Darwin tomorrow to discuss revised proposals for a nation-wide container deposit scheme.

Discussions about a national scheme have been on hold since last year, but pressure to renew discussions has grown over the past 12 months. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting will be chaired by the junior federal Environment Minister, Peter Garrett, and is likely to result in the Northern Territory moving to a paid recycling system.

South Australia has run a successful deposit scheme for years that has resulted in recycling rates above 80 per cent.

NSW has raised recycling from 45 per cent in 2004 to 58 per cent last year but environmental campaigners believe there won't be further significant increases without financial incentives for citizens.

Last week the Total Environment Centre published research that predicted a container deposit scheme for recycled cans and bottles would save NSW \$168 million a year. The centre said the financial windfall would allow for the establishment of depots to recycle e-waste, mobile phones, and batteries.

However, the government fears the public will not accept the extra cost at the point of sale that a deposit scheme entails. It would add \$3 to a case of beer because the scheme is charged per bottle.

"The NSW government supports the investigation into a national container deposit scheme and other options to increase recycling," a spokeswoman for Mr Sartor said.

Another solution to increasing the rate of recycling is a new generation of vending machines imported from the US.

Envirobank, the company which is importing the machines, is hoping to install them in shopping centres, TAFEs, universities, aquatic centres and train and bus stations across Australia.

In the US some machines offer cash for bottles but the Australian machines offer discount coupons.

Envirobank founder Narelle Anderson said the machines could provide advertising and would even charge rental fees because they attracted eco-minded customers.

"The host site wins through reduced litter, increased recycling, reduced waste costs, auditable waste reporting, and reduced footprint," she said.

"The student or consumer wins through the rewards program; each machine dispenses different vouchers that the user selects."



Green idea ... one of the new vending machines at Wynyard. Photo: Lee Besford

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