

Environment Protection (Beverage Containers and Plastic Bags) Act 2011

2024-25 Annual Report

Document title	<i>Environment Protection (Beverage Containers and Plastic Bags) Act 2011</i>
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Glossary of Terms

Terms	Full form
CDS	Container Deposit Scheme
Greater Darwin Area	The area within the Darwin, Litchfield and Palmerston Council boundaries.
HDPE	high-density polyethylene
LPB	liquid paper board
NT	Northern Territory
PET	polyethylene terephthalate, a clear, strong, lightweight and 100% recyclable plastic
Redeemed	Containers returned to depots by the public
Redemption rate	The proportion of approved containers sold that were accepted by collection depots for a 10 cent refund.
Returns	The number of containers returned to scheme coordinators
Return Rate	The proportion of containers returned to CDS coordinators by depots for recycling and reuse

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1. Executive Summary

The Annual Report on the administration of the *Environment Protection (Beverage Containers and Plastic Bags) Act 2011* (the Act) details the operation and performance of the container deposit scheme (CDS) and plastic bag ban in the Northern Territory (NT) during the 2024-25 financial year.

A summary of the CDS in 2024-25 comparative to 2023-24 is provided in the Table below.

Table 1. Comparison of key CDS measures between 2023-24 and 2024-25.

Measure	2023-24	2024-25	Change
Number of containers sold into the scheme	122 305 414	117 716 051	4% decrease
Number of containers redeemed by the public	101 647 376	105 114 251	3% increase
Number of containers returned to coordinators	100 403 036	103 763 161	3% increase
Redemption rate	83%	89%	6% increase
Return Rate	82%	88%	6% increase

Territorians have continued to support the CDS with over 105 million containers redeemed at depots and more than \$10.5 million in refunds paid out during the year.

This marks the eighth consecutive financial year where return rates have been at least 70%, which demonstrates the scheme’s effectiveness at meeting the objectives of litter reduction and resource recovery. This years’ return rate of 88% demonstrates the continued and growing support for the CDS scheme and the circular economy in the NT.

64% of containers were redeemed in the greater Darwin area and 36% in regional areas.

There are 20 approved CDS collection depots covering 33 locations across the NT. Two new CDS collection depots were approved during the reporting period at Barunga and Yulara. An additional location for Envirobank Drop’N’Go pods was also approved at Hartley Street Carpark, Alice Springs.

Public consultation on proposed changes to improve the scheme was undertaken during March and April 2023. The summary report on the results of this consultation was released to the public in July 2023. Additional consultation occurred during June and July 2024 with the release of a draft exposure bill.

In June 2025, Government announced that the CDS would be expanded to beverage containers up to three litres, which would include wine and spirit bottles, larger juice and flavoured milk containers, and plain and other milk containers. Legislation to amend the Act is scheduled for introduction into the Legislative Assembly and debate by late 2025.

2. Legislation

The Act provides the legal framework for the CDS and bans the supply of single-use, lightweight, non-biodegradable plastic bags.

Section 92 of the Act requires the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) to prepare a report on the administration of the Act for each financial year. The NT EPA has delegated this function to the Executive Director Environmental Regulation. The report is to be tabled by the Minister in the Legislative Assembly within four months of the end of the financial year.

The *Environment Protection (Beverage Containers and Plastic Bags) Regulations 2011* (the Regulations) provide for matters such as regulated containers and matters to improve the efficiency or effectiveness of the CDS.

The *Mutual Recognition Act 1992 (Cth)* (MRA) applies the 'mutual recognition principle' in relation to goods. The mutual recognition principle (section 9 of the MRA) states that goods produced in, or imported into, the first State, that may be lawfully sold in that State, may, by virtue of the MRA, be sold in the second State. For the CDS, this principle relates to the requirement for the approved refund marking on regulated beverage containers.

Government is exploring opportunities to improve the CDS. A discussion paper was released for public consultation in early 2023 on harmonising containers, introducing online reporting and introducing targets to improve recovery of materials. The summary report on the results of this consultation was released in July 2023 and additional consultation occurred on a draft exposure bill during June and July 2024. In March 2024, CDS targets were established by the Minister, with the targets commencing 1 July 2024.

In September 2025, Government introduced, into the Legislative Assembly, legislation to amend the Act and Regulations that seeks to expand the CDS to beverage containers up to three litres, which would broaden the scope of the CDS to include wine and spirit bottles, larger juice and flavoured milk containers, and plain and other milk containers. If the amendment legislation is passed, it is anticipated that the amendments will come into force in mid-2026.

3. Container Deposit Scheme

The CDS provides a 10-cent refund to consumers for permitted containers purchased in the NT on or after 3 January 2012. Empty permitted containers must be delivered to an approved collection depot to obtain a refund. The collection depot then arranges with CDS coordinators to claim the reimbursement of the refund amount and associated costs. The CDS coordinator arranges for the containers to be recycled.

3.1. Suppliers

The framework for CDS supplier registration came into effect on 2 October 2021. There were 324 suppliers who held CDS Supplier Registration at the end of the reporting period, up from 288 in 2023-24.

3.2. Coordinators

CDS coordinators are responsible for the coordination of the activities of CDS participants under the CDS. They collect, handle and deliver for reuse or recycling containers received from collection depots.

CDS coordinators are also responsible for the reimbursement of the refund amount and handling costs to collection depots that have accepted delivery of empty approved containers and paid the refund amount to the consumer.

Four CDS coordinators are currently approved to operate under the CDS: Envirobank NT Pty Ltd, Marine Stores Pty Ltd, NT Coordinators Pty Ltd, and Can-Recycling (SA) Pty Ltd trading as Statewide Recycling.

3.3. Collection depots

An approved collection depot is the public face of the CDS, where the community can claim 10 cents for each approved container returned to a depot (redemption). The operator of an approved collection depot pays the refund amount to the consumer for an empty approved container. The collection depot then delivers the containers to CDS coordinators who pay the refund amount and a handling fee relating to the sorting, collating and processing the containers for transport or further processing by the CDS coordinator ready for reuse before being reused or recycled.

A total of 33 locations are serviced by 20 approved collection depots operating in the NT as indicated in the Table below.

Table 2. Depot operators in the NT and the locations of their depots

Depot Operator	Location
Bevcon Recycling Pty Ltd	Berrimah
Bishdun Pty Ltd	Nhulunbuy
East Arnhem Regional Council	Mobile service - Gapuwiyak, Yirrkala, Ramingining, Galiwinku, Milingimbi, Umbakumba, Angurugu, Gunyangara, Milyakburra
Envirobank Recycling (Australia) Pty Ltd	Alice Springs
Envirobank Recycling (Australia) Pty Ltd	Mobile Service - Kintore
Envirobank Recycling (Australia) Pty Ltd	Coles Shopping Centre Smart Pods - Coolalinga, Casuarina, Northlakes and Alice Springs
Envirobank Recycling (Australia) Pty Ltd	Pinelands
Envirobank Recycling (Australia) Pty Ltd	Mobile service - Wagait Beach and Jabiru
Greg Meyer Paving Pty Ltd	Winnellie
Humpty Doo Regional Recycling Pty Ltd	Humpty Doo
M.T. Bins Pty Ltd	Katherine
Murlran Pty Ltd	Elliot
NT Recycling Solutions Pty Ltd	Berrimah
Roper Gulf Regional Council	Mataranka & mobile service - Jilkminggan
Roper Gulf Regional Council	Borrooloola
Roper Gulf Regional Council	Barunga
Thamarrurr Development Corporation	Wadeye
TOMRA Collection Pty Ltd	Coconut Grove
Darrin William Whatley	Tennant Creek

Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia	Yulara
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3.4. Reporting

Under the Act, CDS approval holders must keep records of their CDS activities and submit annual returns on those records each financial year. Incoming annual returns are subject to quality checks.

3.4.1. Return rate

CDS coordinators are required to report annually on the number of containers that have been sold into the NT and the number that have been returned to them by approved collection depots. Containers are recorded as sold when they are supplied to retailers for sale in the NT. There is often a large lag between consumers purchasing the beverages and the empty containers being returned to a CDS coordinator via a depot.

During 2024-25:

- a total of 117,716,051 permitted containers were sold in the NT, down by 4% compared to 2023-24; and
- a total of 103,763,161 permitted containers were returned by a collection depot to a CDS coordinator for recycling or reuse, a 3% increase compared to 2023-24.

The decrease in annual container sales together with the increase in containers returned resulted in an increased annual return rate of 88%.

Table 3. 2024-25 Annual return rate by material type

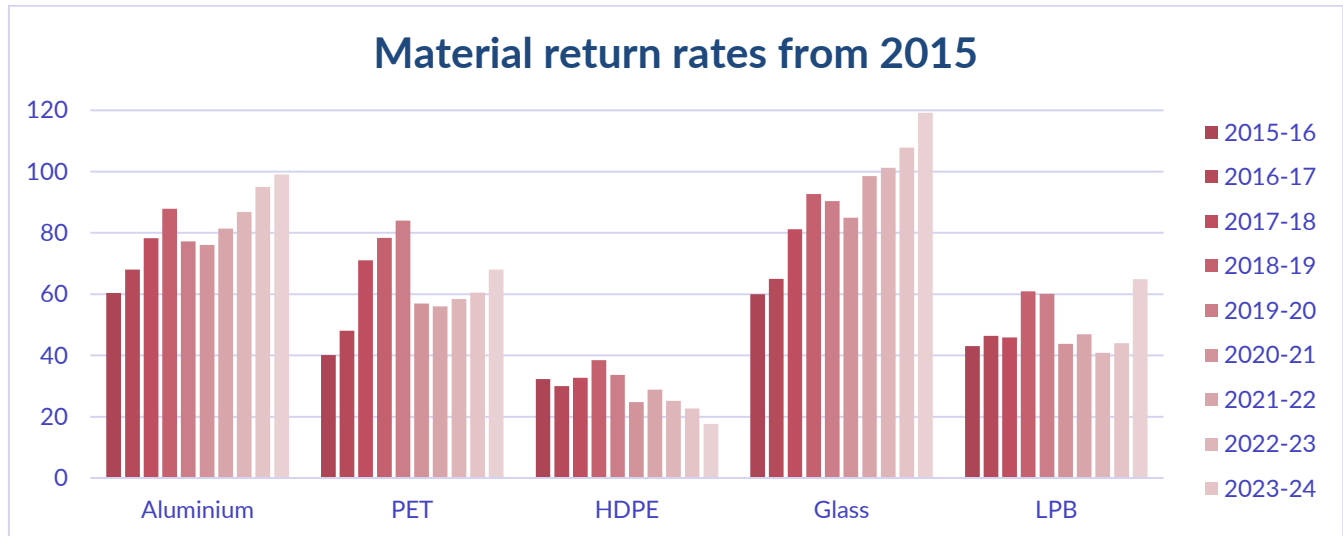
Container material	No. sold in NT	No. returned	Weight returned (tonnes)	Return rate (%)
Aluminium	57,748,404	57,189,941	792	99*
PET	36,602,591	24,911,934	755	68
HDPE	3,501,760	616,890	18	18
Glass	14,937,656	17,810,395	3,531	119*
LPB	4,747,856	3,082,382	54	65
Steel	177,784	62,077	4	35
other	0	89,542	2	0
Total	117,716,051	103,763,161	5,157	88

*These figures, provided by CDS coordinators, are under review. An investigation is a priority action to be undertaken by the Department to verify and understand the reasons for the high return rates including the potential under-reporting of the number of containers sold in the NT.

Similar to previous years, the majority of containers sold in the NT during 2024-25 were made of aluminium, PET and glass, which together represent about 93% of all containers sold.

Glass and aluminium containers continued their trend for high return rates as indicated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Container return rate by material type since the CDS commenced



3.4.2. Resource recovery

The containers returned to CDS coordinators amounted to 5 157 tonnes of container materials that have been diverted from litter and landfills into the circular economy. The vast majority was made up of glass (about 68%) followed by aluminium (about 15%) and PET plastic (about 15%) by weight.

The containers returned to CDS coordinators were bailed or crushed then sold for further processing and recycling as follows:

- Aluminium: recycled into metal sheeting and cans;
- Plastics: recycled into PET flakes, PET bottles and HDPE bottles;
- Glass: recycled into glass remelt for bottles;
- LPB: recycled into writing or tissue paper; and
- Steel: recycled as scrap metal.

The majority of the materials are sent interstate for further processing or recycling. A small proportion of material is sent overseas.

3.4.3. Container redemptions made by the public

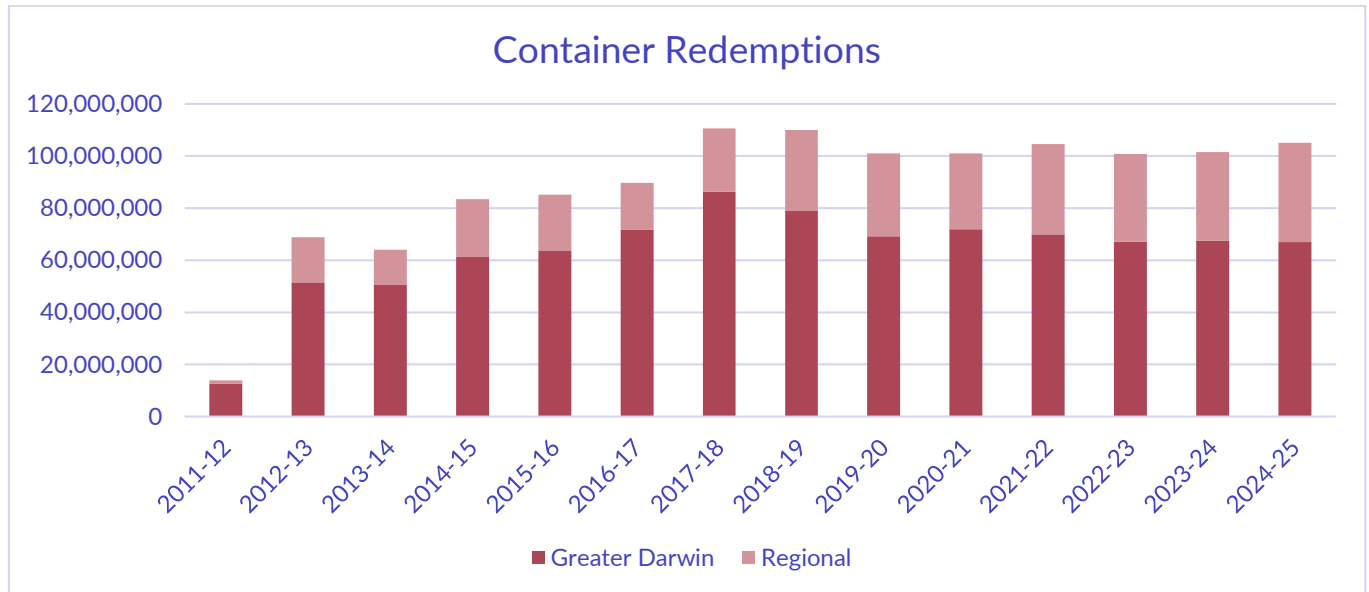
The containers received by depots from the public are referred to as 'redeemed containers'. Collection depots are required to report annually on the number of permitted containers that they have received from the public and paid a 10c refund for.

Note that not all containers redeemed at a collection depot are returned to a CDS coordinator in the same reporting period in which they are redeemed.

For the eighth consecutive year, over 100 million containers were redeemed at collection depots and over \$10 million in container refunds were paid out to Territorians. Over \$3.8 million of this was paid in regional locations outside of the Darwin, Palmerston & Litchfield council areas (Greater Darwin).

The total number of redeemed containers increased by 3,466,875 in 2024-25.

Figure 2. Containers redeemed since 2012



4. Plastic bag ban

The NT plastic bag ban has been in effect since 1 September 2011 and has operated successfully since then.

All Australian states and territories have plastic bag bans. Discussions nationally continued to focus on implementing measures and delivering on the commitment by all states and territories to phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics.

The consultation summary report was released in August 2023. This follows public consultation on proposed changes during March and April 2023. Next steps are under consideration.