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MPs give 10 cents' worth on recycling

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GREENS MP Ian Cohen wants NSW to bring back bottle and can deposits, saying it would be a great way to reduce landfill, cut litter and teach children environmental and social responsibility.

"I want to see containers returned and a deposit refunded," the Upper House MP said.

"I remember doing this as a kid in the '50s," he said. "I'd buy a can of pineapple juice with the money I got from collecting bottles at the beach.

"It's a fantastic lesson for kids, if nothing else, and it's a lot more than that. It would reduce the amount of cans and broken glass on the streets.

"It's so basic and common sense and would be one of those fundamental steps forward where industry and the entire population could work co-operatively."

Mr Cohen said he had lodged a private member's bill in the Upper House and he expected it to be debated in Parliament's first session of the year. In Victoria, bottles and cans could soon be worth big money. Independent MP Craig Ingram has called for a compulsory 10 cent refundable deposit on the drink containers.

Mr Ingram said the deposit would increase recycling, reduce litter and earn valuable money for sporting clubs and community groups.

The new anti-litter push will be discussed by state and territory environment ministers in Melbourne in April. South Australia already has the deposit scheme.

Mr Ingram wrote to Victorian and federal environment ministers last week asking that "container deposit legislation" be added to the agenda of the next Council of Australian Governments' meeting. He said the scheme would be a big win for the environment and for sporting groups. "It increases the amount of recycling of cans and bottles," he said. "And container deposit schemes are great for sporting clubs and kids - it gives them the opportunity to raise pocket money."

Wilderness Society spokesman Gavan McFadzean said the group would "strongly support" Mr Ingram's move.

A spokeswoman for Environment Minister Peter Garrett, Mali Stanton, said there were no plans for a national rollout of container deposit legislation but "the minister will be discussing a range of recycling issues" at the April meeting.

Russell Peel, from the packaging stewardship forum of the Australian Food and Grocery Council, said: "Industry's view is [container deposit legislation] is very expensive. Industry is opposed to deposits because they are a cost-inefficient way of recovering packaging material."

James Tait, corporate affairs director with brewing giant Lion Nathan, warned a container deposit could hurt families by adding more than 10 percent to the weekly grocery bill.

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