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Little cash in drink bottle plan: councils

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Local councils are not likely to get windfall revenue from the State Government's new drink container recycling plan as Environment Minister Judy Edwards claimed, WA Local Government Association president Bill Mitchell says.

Dr Edwards has announced an investigation into a South Australian-style recycling scheme of refundable deposits on drink containers, bottles and cans.

Dr Edwards claimed that an "excellent" feature of the deposit scheme was that it would create a "significant revenue stream" for councils, which could claim refunds for drink containers tossed into household recycling bins.

Mr Mitchell said he expected councils to support the deposit system but any money they got would be negligible.

"Three to five cents per can is not a big thing," he said.

"The benefit (for councils) is the opposite — that we don't have to collect rubbish that is not disposed of properly."

He said there had been a strong push from country councils, particularly shires in the Kimberley and Pilbara, for a deposit system.

But their calls were driven by con-

cerns about littering, not the prospect of a revenue boost.

He said container deposits would help WA reach its target of recycling 65 per cent of all packaging set under an agreement known as the National Packaging Covenant.

Beverage company Diageo, whose brands include Guinness, Bundaberg Rum and UDL, backed the deposit plan for drink containers but said it would prefer to operate under one, consistent nationwide system of labelling and collection.

A statement released by the company said a single system would be more efficient and cost-effective.

Conservation Council senior vice president Sue Graham-Taylor said the plan would bring jobs and new waste reprocessing infrastructure to WA.

Clean Up Australia chairman Ian Kiernan said putting a value on waste containers created good recycling habits.

"Plastic and glass bottles have dreadful recycling rates in Australia with less than a third being recovered," he said. "South Australia is recovering over 80 per cent due to its container refund scheme."

Dr Edwards first declared support for a refundable deposit scheme 2½ years ago. Legislation would not be considered until next year.