

CONTAINERS FOR CHANGE

Statement by Minister for Environment

MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldivis — Minister for Environment) [12.22 pm]: Recently, I announced a new initiative for Containers for Change to make recycling beverage containers in public places much easier. Communities across Western Australia now have an opportunity to have free container exchange points installed on public bins. These are marked baskets that can hold between six and 100 drink containers. Beverage containers placed in the container exchange points are then available for anyone to collect and return to a Containers for Change refund point. Three local governments are now taking part in a trial of the container exchange points—the Cities of Vincent, Fremantle and Wanneroo. We can see these exchange points operating in Hyde Park, on Oxford Street and on the cappuccino strip in Fremantle, as well as in parks across the City of Wanneroo. Another seven local governments have signed up to the program and will install the points in the coming months. Container exchange points are easy to install, low maintenance and allow members of the community to do the right thing by keeping their 10¢ containers out of landfill. Bottles and cans are the most common recyclables found in public bins, so these exchange points will help to increase our recycling rates by improving access and convenience for participating in Containers for Change.

After 18 months of operation, Containers for Change has recovered over 1.3 billion containers. The recycling rate of beverage containers has increased from 34 per cent to 60 per cent. This is a great achievement, and these container exchange points will help to save even more containers from landfill. In addition to the environmental benefits of recycling and avoiding litter and landfill, over \$4.3 million has been donated to community groups and charities, and over 730 jobs have been created. Upwards of 40 per cent of these jobs have gone to people with disabilities, Indigenous Australians and long-term unemployed people. Containers for Change has been designed to be the most accessible and most community-focused scheme in Australia. With refund points operating from Kalumburu in the far north to Esperance in the south, and new public access initiatives like the container exchange points, we are delivering on this ambition.