



Rummaging through public bins is illegal, Grace Fu says in 6 October BCRS replies

Description

Rummaging through public rubbish bins, taking items out of them and leaving or spilling waste on the ground are against the law, and the National Environment Agency will act against people who do so, Minister for Sustainability and the Environment Grace Fu said. She set out the rules in a [written parliamentary reply](#) on Tuesday, 6 October, after MP Hazlina Abdul Halim asked how unhygienic practices under the Beverage Container Return Scheme would be prevented.



Photo: BCRS Ltd

The scheme refunds a 10-cent deposit for each eligible drink can or bottle returned at a Return Right reverse vending machine, and the [deposit has covered regulated drink bottles and cans since 1 October](#). Ms Fu answered four questions on the scheme in writing that day.

Empty the container before you go

Ms Fu said the machines are designed for empty containers, so users should make sure their bottles and cans are empty before returning them.

There are no plans to put liquid-disposal points at the machines. Most users already return their containers empty, she said, so dedicated facilities are not needed.

Why a can gets rejected

In a separate written reply on the same day, to Associate Professor Jamus Lim, Ms Fu said about 98 per cent of transactions at the machines were refunded on the spot in September. Over the

scheme's first five months, about 5 per cent of returns had been unsuccessful; in September that was 2 per cent.

Most eligible containers that are rejected come down to how they are returned, she said.

- A crushed can or bottle will not be identified by the machine.
- A container that is not placed properly on the conveyor belt can be rejected.
- Occasionally, a machine fault stops an eligible container from being processed.

A considerable share of failed transactions appeared to be because users were unfamiliar with the refund process, Ms Fu said. BCRS Ltd, which runs the scheme, has been improving the refund screens and stepping up public education.

If your refund fails

Anyone who does not get their refund at a machine can use the refund portal set up by BCRS Ltd, or email BCRS Ltd with details of the failed transaction.

Refunds are paid through DBS PayLah! and SimplyGo. In another reply, to Mr Alex Yeo, Ms Fu said those methods were chosen because they are accessible to all groups and cost much less per transaction, and that BCRS Ltd is looking at other low-cost refund options.

Machines at void decks

Mr Pritam Singh asked whether machines at HDB void decks could be switched off during quiet hours, because of noise from people depositing large numbers of cans and bottles. Ms Fu said there has not been much feedback on noise from the machines. Where cases come up, BCRS Ltd will look at the feedback and usage patterns and work with the town council on whether a machine's location or operating hours should change.

Date Created

07/10/2026

Author

nuraisyah