

Best Stewardship Outcomes Large Business | Schütz Australia

Stewardship solutions supporting the agricultural and chemical industries

Schütz Australia manufactures Intermediate Bulk Containers (IBCs) and 110-litre drums used by the agricultural and general chemical industries. To develop a sustainable end-of-life solution, it has devised a 'Ticket Collection' program where empty items are returned, free of charge, and recycled.

The products are constructed of plastic and steel components. Since 2019, Schütz has recovered around 16,000 tonnes of plastic in Australia for reuse or recycling. The company currently operates over 1700 collection points nationwide.

Designed for Reusability, Recyclability.

IBC products (also known as bottles), fit inside a steel cage designed by Schütz, and adhere to a global design standard used by around 60 manufacturing sites worldwide. This product standardisation ensures that they will fit into a Schütz cage, no matter the country of manufacture. The cages are cleaned and repaired as necessary for reuse.

Any plastic or steel components removed from the returned IBCs that cannot be reused are recycled off-site. Recyclable plastic is shredded and granulated on-site as feedstock for other packaging components. In Australia, this granulate is used to make corner protectors for IBCs and rings for 110-litre drums. A new plastic bottle is inserted into the reconditioned cage of the IBC and the container is sold back into the market.

The drums are primarily used by agricultural chemical manufacturers; when farmers have used the chemical for crop preparation and protection, the empty drum is collected by Schütz, washed, and resold into the agricultural market.

The company ensures all IBCs and drums are safe to operate, prevent accidental opening and have tamper-evident packaging. If a returned product contains residues, these are vacuumed or decanted before processing.

Reducing the carbon footprint, managing waste

The Ticket Collection program enables the steel cage and pallet of IBCs to be reused indefinitely, reducing energy-intensive iron ore mining and steel production. The company says every reconditioned IBC saves around 100kg of carbon dioxide emissions, compared to manufacturing a new bottle.

Wherever possible, ticket collection is coordinated with new product deliveries to enable trucks to backfill, especially when visiting regional and remote locations in Australia.

Liquid waste decanted from returned IBCs is categorised to ensure there is no mixing that can lead to dangerous reactions. Waste is segregated and sent to facilities that are appropriate for the chemical type. Most liquid waste disposed of by Schütz Australia is used as an alternative fuel in cement manufacture. In 2022, our selected waste company avoided using 29,000 tonnes of coal and generating 146,00 tonnes of carbon dioxide by using industrial waste in its manufacturing process.

Making things easy for end-users

IBCs are delivered to customers with information about the collection of the container at end-of-life through a sticker on the label plate that includes a QR code. Customers use this to book the collection of empty IBCs.

Schütz promotes its return program to all customers purchasing new containers and includes incentives in sales contracts based on the number of IBCs and drums returned for reconditioning. We engage with local territory managers to help spread the message and regularly meet with chemical retailers to ensure awareness and inclusion in the return system.

Given many end-users are farmers, Schütz has an advertising program at agricultural show days in rural and regional Australia. In 2023 Schütz launched beer coasters promoting the ticket return program. These are provided to rural and regional hotels for free to engage with end users of drums and IBCs who may not be aware of the free collection service.

A partnership with Agsafe, which has Drum Master, a collection program for 20-litre plastic containers emptied of agricultural chemicals, further promotes the Schütz return system.

Social and economic benefits

Of almost 300 people employed by Schütz Australia, at least a third support the ticket collection and reconditioning services. Schütz contracts 56 local transporters to arrange collection in all states.

Customers benefit from a reduced cost when purchasing reconditioned IBCs or laundered drums, compared to new items.