Queensland
Retail Battery Recovery Program

Summary of program findings and recommendations

April 2026

Overview

The Australian Retail Council was engaged by the Queensland Government to assess whether retail environments can safely and practically support expanded battery collection and recovery.

The program tested retail collection models, delivered statewide education and engagement, and identified conditions required for safe and practical retail participation. It examined both what works in retail settings and what limits broader implementation under current system conditions.

What was delivered

The program delivered:

- **three retail battery collection models** considered
- **pilot testing at a regional retail store**
- **broader QLD and SEQLD options progressed through engagement and approval review**
- **face-to-face engagement** with over **920 retail stores** across 145 retail precincts and shopping centres
- **indirect engagement with over 6,000 retailers** nationally
- **consultation with 54 stakeholders**, across industry, government and supply chains
- **development of retail education materials**, including factsheets, posters and customer handouts
- **assessment of operational constraints**, including safety, insurance, cost, logistics, data capture and processing

920+
retail stores engaged

145
retail precincts and shopping centres

6000+
retailers engaged nationally

54
stakeholders consulted

70kgs+
of batteries collected

Key insights

Retailers are generally willing to collect batteries they sell. However, this ambition is constrained by risk, insurance, cost, customer behaviour, site suitability, technical capability and recovery pathways.

Findings

- **retailers are willing to collect batteries** where risks are clearly defined and manageable
- **high willingness for products retailers sell and know**, but low for products they don't
- **structured collection models with clear acceptance criteria** improve safety
- **staff-mediated collection reduces risk** of unsafe returns
- **many retail sites are unsuitable** for safe collection
- **clear roles across the recovery chain improve confidence**
- **existing stewardship schemes provide a foundation** for expansion
- **a tiered, risk-based retail participation model is most feasible** under current conditions
- **range of factors impact retailer ability to participate,** such as cost, site suitability and other factors
- **education, public messaging and media coverage** influences participation and disposal outcomes

Constraints and barriers

- **inability to secure insurance and liability** coverage is a major barrier
- **serious safety risks** posed by damaged, unknown, or high-energy batteries
- **high costs** for collection, transport and processing outweigh material value
- **high technical and hazard management skills** needed but outside retail capacity
- **internal and external concerns**, including executive, insurer and landlord, can prevent participation
- **low knowledge and assumptions** drive undesirable retailer and consumer behaviour
- **free-rider and non-compliant products** create inequitable responsibility for stewardship

Role of retail

Retail is visible, accessible and closely linked to battery sales, making it a logical access point for consumers. However, battery recovery is a multi-step process involving intake, storage, transport and processing, each with associated risks and costs.

Retail is best suited to clearly defined, less complex battery types supported by established schemes and infrastructure. Site feasibility varies, with limitations in smaller stores and shared buildings, such as shopping centres and malls.

More complex batteries (e.g. damaged, unknown, e-mobility, embedded and large-format lithium batteries) require specialist handling and may not suit retail collection.

Recommendations for end-of-life battery collection through retail

Future retail battery recovery models should:

- **address insurance and liability coverage barriers**
- **use a tiered, risk-based retail participation model**
- **establish clear acceptance and exclusion criteria, with referral pathways to specialist collectors**
- **coordinate roles and responsibility across the recovery system, including retailers, recyclers, stewardship schemes, waste operators and government**
- **establish sustainable funding so the high costs burden of collection, transport and recycling costs does not create inequity or unaffordable products**
- **keep data collection simple and proportionate, without increasing risk or complexity for retail staff**
- **strengthen consistent, practical consumer and retailer education and communication on safe battery disposal**

Conclusion

The program demonstrated that retailers are willing to support battery recovery, particularly for batteries within their product range and defined acceptance criteria.

However, retail collection of all battery types at all stores is not currently feasible. The most effective model is staged participation, where retailer roles vary based on battery type, site capability, insurance, funding and recovery systems.

Retail can contribute to battery recovery, but only within a system that supports safe, funded and clearly defined participation.

Queensland Government

arc AUSTRALIAN RETAIL COUNCIL

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