

Inquiry - Improving Queensland's Container Refund Scheme

Submission No: 3

Submitted by: [REDACTED]

Publication: Making the submission public and withholding your name public

Attachments: No attachment

Submitter Comments:

I welcome this inquiry not only as a former resident of Queensland (2010 to 2021) with ongoing family connections in Southeast Queensland but also as a former senior manager at two of the largest Container Refund Point (CRP) operators in the state. Additionally, I am a leading Container Deposit Scheme (CDS)/Container Refund Scheme (CRS) practitioner in Australia with international experience. I'll begin with other matters. It is critical that the current network of Container Refund Point operators be heavily consulted during this review. In fact, I urge the Queensland Government to investigate COEX through its refund point network. During my time directly participating in the Queensland CRS, I openly stated that COEX is the most incompetent organization I have encountered in my 30+ year career [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] COEX operates with a master-servant approach in managing CRP operators and frequently introduces new operators to the detriment of existing ones. For example, the saturation of Toowoomba with new refund points has challenged the ongoing viability of TOMRA's depot in the center of Toowoomba. A similar situation exists in Coomera, where Return-It has a depot that has been encroached upon by a TOMRA reverse vending machine (RVM) kiosk at Coomera Westfield. More recently, an unproven new RVM entrant was awarded a refund point in a nearby shopping center to the west of the Return-It depot. These issues are widespread across the network. Furthermore, there are numerous stories of underhanded dealings in expressions of interest, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The current debacle surrounding the attempt to expand the network through the introduction of small-format RVMs is a prime example. Dig deeper, and you'll uncover more. Anecdotal evidence suggests that CRP operators remain as disgruntled as ever with COEX. COEX makes changes without consulting one of its most important stakeholders: the CRP operators. The introduction of wine and spirits was rushed, with operators given only days' notice before the announcement. And hasn't the introduction of wine and spirits been a flop? Return rates are lower than ever, despite the expansion to include a whole new category of bottles. Further investigation into the CRP network would establish whether COEX is fit to serve as the Product Responsibility Organization. With tens of millions in retained earnings, what exactly is COEX doing—apart from ensuring it remains heavily resourced and housed in plush offices in the Brisbane CBD? Some may argue that COEX is merely a puppet of an interfering board that is heavily weighted with beverage industry stakeholders—who ultimately benefit when return rates remain low. As for the scheme itself, it is fair to say that its scope and objectives are no longer fit for purpose. In this regard, I cite the Australian Council of Recycling (ACOR) paper, Priorities for Nationally Harmonised Container Deposit Schemes – April 2024, which outlines improvements that can be made. If Queensland wants the leading CRS/CDS in Australia, it should work toward implementing these initiatives. <https://acor.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/240415-ACOR-Position-paper-on-CDS-national-harmonisation.pdf> I wish the committee every success in its review and in moving the Queensland CRS to a place where the statutory target of 85% is genuinely achievable and all stakeholders are treated fairly and with respect. Please note this submission is provided independently and no former employer or associates were consulted as to its content. It is a personal view only.