

Executive Summary

On 26 March 2026, the Honourable Andrew Powell MP, Minister for the Environment and Tourism and Minister for Science and Innovation (Minister), introduced the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Strengthening the Container Refund Scheme) Amendment Bill 2026 (Bill) into the Legislative Assembly. The Bill was referred to the Health, Environment and Innovation Committee (committee) for detailed consideration.

The overarching purpose of the Bill is to improve oversight and governance arrangements of Queensland's Container Refund Scheme (Scheme). In particular, the Bill aims to implement the legislative aspects of the Queensland Government's response to the recommendations made in the committee's Report No. 14, 58th Parliament - Improving Queensland's Container Refund Scheme (Report No. 14).

To achieve this objective, the Bill proposes to make various amendments to the *Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011*. Significant measures in the Bill include:

- clarifying that the Product Responsibility Organisation (PRO) is a unit of public administration for the purpose of the *Crime and Corruption Act 2001* to enhance oversight mechanisms for the Scheme
- requiring an annual audit of the PRO Board by an independent auditor and enable the Minister to require an audit of the PRO
- establishing a fixed term for appointment of the PRO and renewal framework
- requiring that the majority of directors of the PRO Board be independent of the beverage industry and ensure the composition of the PRO Board includes expertise in waste and recycling, local government, community and social enterprise capability
- establishing that all directors must be appointed by the Minister with fixed term appointments and regular renewal
- expanding the functions of the PRO to include supporting environmental or community programmes as well as the development of infrastructure required to recycle or transport waste in Queensland
- adopting legislative safeguards to prevent unfair conduct by the PRO
- requiring the development of a governance and investment plan which will include the investment and allocation of surplus and retained scheme funds
- requiring the development of a network of container refund points plan that will detail the plan for expansion of the Scheme's network and ensure that the economic viability of the existing return points is considered, and
- providing for Scheme pricing to consider the impact on small beverage manufacturers and enable exemptions to provide relief for small beverage manufacturers.

The committee received a written briefing from the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) on 2 April 2026, conducted a public briefing with DETSI on 9 April 2026, and received further information from DETSI about the operation of the Bill in response to additional questions from the committee. The committee received submissions from 27 stakeholders. DETSI provided the committee with detailed written responses to these submissions on 21 April 2026 and 24 April 2026. Finally, 7 stakeholders gave evidence at public hearings on 22 April 2026 and 28 April 2026.

The committee carefully considered the key issues raised by the evidence presented. Overall, while stakeholders supported the Bill's intent to improve the governance, transparency and accountability of the Scheme, some stakeholders raised concerns regarding the Bill's implementation of recommendations made by the committee in Report No. 14, particularly in relation to:

- the expansion of and accessibility to the Scheme to increase container return rates
- the introduction of an independent complaints body to address disputes arising from the Scheme, particularly from operators, and
- the retrospective application of the declaration of the PRO as a unit of public administration for the purpose of the *Crime and Corruption Act 2001*.

The committee assessed the Bill's compliance with fundamental legislative principles and concluded that the Bill has sufficient regard for the rights and liberties of individuals and the institution of Parliament. The committee also carefully considered the Bill's compatibility with human rights and concluded that any limits on the right to take part in public life and the right to privacy were proportionate and justified.

The committee made two (2) recommendations, found at page viii of this report, including that the Bill be passed.