

Waste Reduction and Recycling (Strengthening the Container Refund Scheme) Amendment Bill 2026

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The Expression of Interest (EOI) process for depots should be improved to ensure greater transparency, fairness, and public confidence. In its current form, there is a perception that the process has at times lacked openness and has been surrounded by controversy, particularly where certain groups appear to have secured a disproportionate number of depots compared with others. To maintain trust in the scheme, the selection criteria, assessment process, and reasons for awarding depots should be made clearer and more publicly accountable. A more transparent process would help demonstrate that opportunities are being allocated on merit, competition is fair, and the scheme is operating in the public interest.

Additionally, the committee should examine the expansion of bag drop sites, particularly for the pub industry with detached bottleshops. Operators could be allocated a designated number of bag drops per yard, set at a fixed distance from the yard (e.g., within 50-100m) and capped at a reasonable limit per site. This would create fairness across the scheme by standardising access, preventing oversaturation in some areas while encouraging higher redemption rates in underserved regions. It would also incentivise pubs and bottleshops to participate more actively, boosting overall container recovery without undue advantage to larger players.

These changes would enhance the scheme's efficiency, equity, and effectiveness in line with its objects under the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011.