




Speech By
Rob Molhoek

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

Record of Proceedings, 16 October 2025

HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE

Report

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (10.17 am): I lay upon the table of the House a report of the Health, Environment and Innovation Committee titled Report No. 14: 58th Parliament: *Improving Queensland's container refund scheme*. I commend the report to the House.

Tabled paper: Health, Environment and Innovation Committee: Report No. 14, 58th Parliament—Improving Queensland's Container Refund Scheme [1593](#).

At the outset of this inquiry I expected we were simply looking for ways to make a good scheme better, lift recovery rates, encourage greater participation, improve collection facilities and enhance community benefit. Instead, we uncovered serious failures in governance, management and accountability.

The committee received almost 120 submissions with nearly 30 requesting anonymity. Some praised the scheme; others raised disturbing concerns about its rollout and operation. We heard from whistleblowers and operators who described bullying, harassment and intimidation by Coex staff across multiple sites. There were also allegations that former employees manipulated markets to their benefit, securing new sites at the expense of existing operators.

Evidence indicated that aspects of the scheme's establishment were rushed and poorly planned. Some operators were promised they would be supported through word-of-mouth agreements only to later be presented with one-sided contracts contradicting earlier assurances and offering no certainty about territory or future planning. Others invested heavily in good faith, only to be left stranded by what they allege was the unconscionable conduct of Coex and individuals within it. We also heard allegations of inappropriate audit practices including staff being asked to allow their personal belongings to be searched. Evidence also pointed to serious governance failings, unresolved conflicts of interest and complaints that were not resolved in a timely manner by the former government.

This parliament and the committee cannot ignore the voices of those who have been bullied and harassed. That is why the committee has made 21 recommendations for improvements and yesterday morning referred 10 allegations to the Crime and Corruption Commission for investigation. From the beginning this fused and novel model, approved by the former minister and now opposition leader, raised concerns. That model established a scheme administered by a not-for-profit company owned by two of Australia's largest bottlers, effectively handing them monopoly control. Those same corporations dominated the board and awarded the main service agreement to a joint venture they owned themselves. In return for loans they gained extra board seats and maintained control long after those loans could have been repaid.

This scheme now turns over nearly half a billion dollars a year, yet only 36 per cent of this is returned to consumers, with less than two per cent going to charities, schools, sporting clubs or community organisations. Despite being a not-for-profit, Coex holds substantial retained earnings with no clear policy for using those funds for environmental or charitable purposes. Instead, it appears those

reserves have been used to reduce the bottlers' own contribution rates, effectively transferring value from Queenslanders back to the beverage manufacturers that control the scheme. Let us be clear: it is everyday Queenslanders—mums, dads and kids—who pay for this scheme. They cover the costs of the refunds as they are all built into the wholesale price of every drink they buy.

During our inquiry we reviewed thousands of pages of documentation, departmental correspondence, legal material and a large number of cabinet-in-confidence documents—hundreds of pages—that remain confidential. We also received a copy of a recent Clayton Utz review and the current minister's correspondence, which rightly has imposed stronger governance conditions on Coex. In the interests of transparency and as a proud member of the Crisafulli government, the committee that I chair has resolved to publish that Clayton Utz report.

I want to thank the committee secretariat for its courage, diligence and commitment to what has been a very challenging and difficult inquiry. In closing, I draw the House's attention to a summary of the committee's first recommendation, which asks the Minister for the Environment to consider amending the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011 to ensure the existing scheme coordinator is subject to stricter oversight or to adopt a governance model that is better aligned with the objects of the scheme and the public interest.