



Speech by

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**MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPILLY**

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### **SOFT DRINKS**

**Mr LEE** (Indooroopilly—ALP) (10.12 p.m.): I would like to draw to the attention of the House the dangers of excessive soft drink consumption. I believe that this is an issue that needs addressing immediately. Recently, a Harvard study reported that there is a high correlation between excessive soft drink consumption and obesity. Earlier this year the US Senate introduced a bill that would allow the US Department of Agriculture to restrict the sale of soft drinks in schools. They did this because there are clear and obvious health risks associated with the excessive consumption of soft drinks.

Firstly, the sugar content of a soft drink is, as the Harvard study concluded, contributing to a phenomenon of obesity among children, not to mention the damage that is being done to young teeth and gums. I recently spoke with a number of local dentists and this was of particular concern to them. Also, every 375 millilitre can of Coca-Cola contains approximately 40 milligrams of caffeine, often causing children—and adults as well, I should say—to crave for more caffeine. High levels of soft drink and caffeine use by children has also been directly linked to hyperactivity, anxiety and long-term dependency.

There are obvious health risks involved with these products and I would implore the House and the parliament to actively seek to protect the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders. While restricting the consumption of soft drinks is clearly impractical, I propose that the House consider forcing soft drink companies to mark their cans and bottles with labels warning of the dangers of excessive consumption. Like manufacturers of cigarettes, I believe that the manufacturers of a soft drink have a social responsibility to the consumers to clearly mark their products with the health problems that may result by consuming their product in excessive quantities.

I believe we have a responsibility to look after the health of young children who often consume such products and who frequently do not genuinely know what they are drinking. It is fair to say that by the time most people consider drinking alcohol or smoking, they are at an age where they usually understand the associated health risks. In contrast, this is frequently not the case with children, who are often only a few years old when they are first exposed to soft drinks.

I believe that we need to act immediately. Therefore, I believe it is necessary to introduce such labelling and to inform both parents and children of the health risks associated with excessive soft drink consumption.

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