




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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**TOBACCO AND OTHER SMOKING PRODUCTS (SMOKE-FREE PLACES)
AMENDMENT BILL; TOBACCO AND OTHER SMOKING PRODUCTS
(EXTENSION OF SMOKING BANS) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (5.25 pm): I rise today to speak in favour and support of the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Smoke-free Places) Amendment Bill 2015. As a nonsmoker myself, I am fortunate that I can look back on my upbringing and note that, despite many offerings and many temptations, as a teenager I never got hooked on cigarettes. Growing up in the 1970s and 1980s smoking was everywhere. My parents smoked everywhere. It was quite normal. Advertising was not restricted, smoking was not restricted and the sale of cigarettes was under minor regulation only.

I can remember that in secondary school smoking amongst students was rife. The schools spent considerable time, effort and money trying to catch and punish students smoking under trees, around corners, behind rubbish bins and certainly in the farthest places of the sporting ovals that kids could get to. At the time there was no education, there were no public campaigns and smoking was a significant part of the economy back then. It undoubtedly provided billions of dollars in sponsorship, billions of dollars in taxes and billions of dollars in revenue, and it was a large part of the economy. But it was hurting people. It was damaging health, it was damaging families and it was a major handbrake on society and certainly the way our civilisation functioned.

I can recall in the early 1990s I managed a small country motel in northern Victorian at a place called Rutherglen, very famous for its wines, muscats, ports and sherries. During my time running the motel it frustrated me that every morning my wife and I would spend considerable hours removing the smell of cigarettes from motel rooms, trying to get the smell out of the linen, out of the curtains, out of the carpet. We spent thousands of dollars on fancy air fresheners and other equipment to try to make it easier so we could turn rooms around inside of a couple of hours for guests coming in that afternoon who wanted to have a nice fresh-smelling room.

One day I came up with an idea. My idea was that I would convert five of my rooms into nonsmoking rooms. In doing this, I contacted I think it was the Quit campaign in Victoria at the time and I spoke to someone there and said, 'I need some advice, maybe some stickers or some signage. Can you help me out with this?' Interestingly, their advice at the time was that it was not such a good idea. They thought that it would be damaging for my business to have a number of rooms that were designated nonsmoking.

I persisted with it and we trialled the idea, and those five rooms became the busiest rooms very quickly in our motel. I found that when guests arrived and they were offered a smoking room or a nonsmoking room over half the people requested the nonsmoking room. That was 1992. The tide was starting to turn at that point. Attitudes were certainly changing. Those rooms became so popular that even smokers actually requested the rooms. They honestly admitted at reception that they were a

smoker but they could not stand the smell of cigarette smoke in motel rooms themselves and they promised to smoke outside—which everyone did.

Moving on a few years and my career went into emergency services—firstly, firefighting. I can remember some of the house fires I attended as a volunteer firefighter where the ignition was actually caused by people smoking in bed, falling asleep and waking up to the bedroom around them on fire, or car accidents where the driver at fault admitted to smoking whilst driving and losing control of the cigarette down into their lap and on to the driver's seat—not a good combination at 100 kilometres an hour and almost always ending in carnage.

The significant impact for me was the Victorians and Queenslanders to whom I later attended as a paramedic. It amazed me to see the effects on their health and their kids and to see families struggling to put food on the table yet somehow they were always able to afford a packet or two of cigarettes every day. When did cigarettes become the first priority for people's pay packets and their children's food was pushed somewhere down the bottom of the list? I witnessed people with extreme lung disease, barely able to breathe with a diminished lung capacity that physically stopped them from walking from one end of their one-bedroom apartment to the other, but yet they would still sit in the chair with an endless supply of cigarettes, an overflowing bucket of butts and a never-ending cough. Most times they had no friends or family; no-one wanted to come and see them. There was hardly a stick of furniture in the house. My thoughts always were: how did it get to this? How did this person get to this situation?

I note the comments from the member for Caloundra, who earlier talked about the nightclubs. I can remember the nightclubs quite well—the smell on your clothes and the pain in your throat the next morning. We thought at the time that the pain in our throat was from yelling and singing and stuff until after we saw the ban of smoking in clubs. Then we worked out that perhaps it was from smoking after all. After that my mother was always grateful for not having to put up with the smell on the clothes.

There is no doubt that the opportunity to change smoking behaviour starts at the teenage years, and I have heard plenty of speakers talk about that this afternoon. That is definitely the opportunity that we have as a parliament. If we can continue to decrease the percentage of teenagers taking up the habit, then one day we might actually win this battle. As a government we must continue to act on reducing the prevalence of cigarettes in our society. We have got the ability. It is great to see that we have a bipartisan approach to continue on this pathway. I agree that an outright prohibition would not work, but a strategic gradual movement towards ending smoking would work. One day people will be reading *Hansard* of today's speeches and they will probably be amazed to think that we still allowed cigarettes as part of society.

We have proven to society that people can adapt to change. We have seen that over 30 years. If a smoker came to your home today, they would never contemplate lighting up in your house. However, turn back the clock 30 years and it was accepted, it was the norm and they would probably even be a bit insulted if you asked them to take it outside. What I like most about this bill is how it targets second-hand smoke with increased limitations on smoking in public areas, in particular, the very places where the vulnerable teenagers hang out. I want to congratulate both the Minister for Health and the member for Caloundra for pursuing changes to smoking. I commend the bill.