




Speech By
Hon. Mark Bailey

MEMBER FOR YEERONGPILLY

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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**

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply) (8.04 pm): The right of people to clean air is a fundamental right. This bill is about continuing what has been a major area of policy success in this country over the last 20 to 30 years where we have seen smoking rates halved to the point where our smoking rates here in Australia are about middle ranking now. We are down a long way from where we were, but we still have a long way to go. I think it should be our objective to be the world leaders in terms of smoking policy and continue to drive that rate down. It is down to about 13.3 per cent now. Let's continue that process. That is what this legislation is about: continuing that process of reducing smoking for a whole range of reasons.

I cannot help but think of this policy in terms of my responsibilities as the Minister for Road Safety. Last year we lost 242 Queenslanders on our roads and yet we lost 3,400 Queenslanders to smoking. I think that puts it in perspective. That is a lot of people who are needlessly dying and needlessly suffering because of their addiction. Let's be clear; we are talking about addiction. It is a highly addictive drug. The evidence on that is absolutely clear. That research was disputed for a long time by the tobacco companies, but it is absolutely clear that it is a highly addictive and often very deliberately addictive drug for reasons of profitability. Once people are addicted, it is a very difficult drug to get off.

In some ways, this legislation supports those people to cure their addiction to nicotine and it makes it harder for them everywhere they go; it increases the social unacceptability of nicotine and smoking. It supports people at the margins trying to get rid of it and to get healthy by making it harder to smoke, whether it is outside a government building in that zone, at a public transport stop, a pedestrian mall, a swimming pool et cetera. This bill specifically broadens that scope. I might add that this supports other people. Everyone has a right to have clean air. If we are going about our daily business in life and we are not smokers, we deserve the right to have clean air. This is a unique drug in the sense that there are a lot of other drugs that human beings take today and have done over human history, but it is only this drug that, if consumed near someone else, they are directly forced to inhale. That is what puts smoking in a different category to other drugs in terms of the impingement on people's rights. I think the term 'passive smoking' is a misnomer because it is not passive; it is actually invasive smoking; it is smoking that is enforced on other people. It is our responsibility as a government to stop that infringement on other people's rights and on other people's health.

Another important part of this legislation is the consistency. The current legislation in this range of provisions is inconsistent right across the state depending on the local council and the nature of municipal politics largely from area to area. I think it is well and truly time that people have the right to expect that if they go to a bus stop in Cairns, Brisbane or on the Gold Coast the same laws should

apply, the same expectations should apply, that their health should be protected, that their rights to clean air should be protected against those of other people who may wish to infringe upon them. One of my observations is that many smokers are often—and I do not like to cast aspersions—very ignorant and do not take into account the impact of their smoking on other people.

It is legitimate for us to put out the signal about what is reasonable and what is not reasonable and enforce it. When I travel in other countries I notice that their smoking legislation is a long way behind Australia's, and you can see how people in other cultures assume that smoking is the norm. When you go to a restaurant or a cafe it is very hard to get away from it because there are people smoking all around you and it is very, very invasive. I am very proud of Australian policy in this regard over the last 20 to 25 years. I think we have made great advances and the proof is in the numbers, but in my view 13.3 per cent is 13.3 per cent too many.

This is a fiscally prudent bill because of the impact of nicotine addiction on the public purse. It is the public health system that picks up the cost for people's health problems which inevitably occur. Last year there were 36,000 hospitalisations in Queensland alone. When you look at the profile of public health expenditure over future years in terms of this issue, particularly with the baby boomers, it is on the public purse. It is the taxpayer who largely picks up the treatment of those people who are addicted to nicotine, as they often come back for more and more treatment. My aunt was one of those who would be treated, but she could not give it up and she would keep smoking. She went in and out of the hospital system because she could not give it up. That is unfortunately the case in far too many instances.

Mr Rickuss: It is absolutely amazing when you see people on a drip smoking outside the hospital.

Mr BAILEY: That is exactly right. It is very sad to see people in such a dire state, but they cannot overcome the addiction and we have to support those people as much as we can.

I certainly support the comments from the member for Springwood in terms of protecting children at places like swimming pools, skate parks and public transport stops. It is very clear that children are not as developed physically, so the impact of passive smoking on them and their health is much more severe than it would be on an adult. This bill is very much about protecting children as well. We are ranked about 50th in the world. I think we need to improve on that by a long way.

I certainly support Dr Lynham's comments about the impact of cigarettes on the environment. The number of cigarette butts that are on the ground which go into our natural environment every day is regrettable and the more we can reduce that, the better.

I also support the bill for a personal reason. My father was a very heavy smoker. He smoked three packets a day every day throughout his adult life, and unsurprisingly he only made it to the age of 60. When I was 16 one of my first political decisions was to join a nonsmokers' movement because of the reality of my father smoking that heavily. Eventually it killed him. It took him out at the age of 60, which is a very young age really, and that made this issue very real for me.

Having some drama background as well meant that, when you learn about acting and human behaviour, you find out that smoking is one of those things that separates people from other people. Whether it is the habit or whether it is the aroma if it is on your clothes consistently, it is actually a form of human disconnection and separation. That is also partly the nature of addiction.

I am very happy to support this bill. It is a responsible bill on so many levels, and we have to continue to have the best possible best practice policy when it comes to preventing smoking in public places with its inevitable cancerous outcomes. It is very good that this is a bipartisan position; I certainly support and welcome the support of the opposition. I think having a strong parliamentary position helps to put the message out to the community that we have to do more and that it is unacceptable for our community to tolerate people who continue to damage themselves, the public health system and others in that process.