




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

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TOBACCO AND OTHER SMOKING PRODUCTS AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr TANTARI** (Hervey Bay—ALP) (4.40 pm): I rise in support of the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Amendment Bill 2023. This bill should not be underestimated in its impact in improving the health of many Queenslanders. It is our duty to protect the wellbeing and future of our respective communities and, in particular, our younger generation. It is important that we tackle these issues head-on, understanding the consequences they have for our society, and look at making sure that we continue to reduce our smoking rates, which has been very effective over the last many decades. It is very important that we do that to improve the overall health of our communities.

This bill we are debating achieves its policy objectives: by amending the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998 to establish a licensed scheme for the wholesale and retail sale of smoking products; by ensuring there are effective deterrents against the unlawful supply of smoking products, including stronger penalties; by empowering Queensland Health to monitor compliance; by modernising and clarifying the requirements for advertising, display and promotion of smoking products, including their application to online trading; by expanding smoke-free public spaces, including community spaces for children, enhancing offences, protecting children from the dangers of smoking; and improving protections at liquor licensed premises, including tighter requirements for smoking areas and tobacco product vending machines.

Tobacco has long been recognised as a major public health concern worldwide. Its devastating impact on individuals, families and communities cannot be overstated. The detrimental effects on human health are well-documented with links to a range of life-threatening conditions such as lung cancer and heart disease. By introducing a licensing scheme for the wholesale and retail sale of smoking products, our state can take a significant step towards reducing the prevalence of smoking and its associated harms from second-hand smoke, while also ensuring that the controls are put in place to regulate and control the sale and distribution of tobacco products to restrict the illicit tobacco trade through what we call—and many have said here earlier—the chop-chop shops which have popped up throughout our communities. The amendments to the act will enable a stricter set of standards for retailers, ensuring that they adhere to responsible practices. Licensing will allow for increased enforcement of existing laws, leading to reduced accessibility for underage individuals and will ultimately achieve the goal set down by nearly all health authorities around the world in lowering the use of smoking products and smoking rates across our state.

The concerns regarding tobacco usage extend beyond licensing alone with education and awareness playing a pivotal role in deterring people, particularly young people, from taking up smoking in the first place. This bill modernises advertising because suppliers are increasingly using digital marketing to reach new consumers, both in schools and within our wider communities. Doing this is crucial to lowering the uptake of these products. Through educating our children about the dangers of smoking, highlighting the long-term health consequences and showcasing the benefits of a smoke-free lifestyle, we can empower children and young adults to make informed choices and say no to smoking products.

While we address the issue of tobacco licensing, we need to also confront the emerging threat of vaping which has gained popularity amongst young people in recent years. I understand that we currently have an inquiry into vaping being undertaken by our government, but I would like to reflect on vaping or electronic cigarettes being marketed as safer alternatives to traditional smoking. Mounting evidence suggests that vaping carries its own set of dangers particularly when it comes to our children. One of the major concerns is the aggressive marketing and the appealing flavours that are specifically targeted at our young people. Preliminary evidence is showing that many vape products currently on the market do not indicate the chemical make-up of the vape the consumers are ingesting which, frankly, is quite alarming. Moreover, the long-term health effects of vaping remain uncertain as the technology is relatively new and comprehensive research is still ongoing. Early studies indicate potential harm to respiratory and cardiovascular systems, along with detrimental effects on brain development. We cannot afford to gamble with the health of our children and adolescents. The precautionary principle must guide our actions, urging us to take preventive measures before it is too late.

Protecting our youth from the dangers of smoking products needs a multifaceted approach. This legislation amends the act to regulate the marketing, sale and accessibility of all smoking products, mirroring the stringent measures we have implemented on tobacco, including banning the sale of e-cigarettes to minors. The current act prohibits the supply of smoking products to a person under the age of 18 years, but there is no restriction on the age at which a person may supply a smoking product to another person. The bill amends the act to prohibit the supply and handling of smoking products by children, with the prohibition commencing on 1 September 2024. For small businesses employing less than 20 people, the commencement day will be September 2025. Restricting marketing tactics that target young people and implementing clear warning labels highlighting the risks of nicotine addiction and potential health hazards from vaping are also important. It is important that we continue to invest in educational campaigns that educate our children, parents and teachers about the dangers of smoking products and vaping, equipping them with accurate information that debunk the misconceptions surrounding tobacco use and e-cigarettes and empowering them to make informed decisions.

I cannot recommend these amendments strongly enough and ask all members to support this bill before the House. This legislation does create a healthier state. It will further strengthen the protection of our children from the dangers of a potential lifelong addiction to substances that damage their health and brings premature death.

Finally I would like to acknowledge the work done by the former and current ministers for health, the committee and their secretariat in formulating and reviewing this legislation. I support this very timely bill and the amendments before the House.