




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 25 May 2023

TOBACCO AND OTHER SMOKING PRODUCTS AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (12.35 pm): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I rise to make a brief contribution to the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Amendment Bill 2023. Certainly, a number of speakers in the chamber during the course of this debate have outlined the impact and effects of tobacco products on the health of Queenslanders. Certainly, I am not immune to that. I have seen those impacts right across this state—from young people to the elderly—and it is certainly something that we need to address. Just as we have seen this throughout Queensland, my Burdekin electorate has seen its fair share of issues surrounding irresponsibility in regard to tobacco and other products.

I personally have been contacted by constituents with concerns regarding illicit tobacco sales and the sale of vapes to children. What particularly alarms me is that the fight against the sale of vapes to children in my electorate has actually been led by school leaders. They have actually contacted me and expressed their alarm and concern about the increasing incidents of vaping in schools. I know from talking to the principals at all my schools throughout the electorate that it is the single-biggest issue in those schools at the present time. When you think about the numbers of students being suspended and expelled because of vaping and the impact that then will have on their education, this is a serious issue.

Regardless of whether there have been allegations of chop-chop or illegal sales of vapes, what the people who have contacted me want is simple—they want the rules enforced and they want the rules to apply to everyone. What we have seen to date are allegations surrounding illegal sales ending up in the too-hard basket. For example, I recently had a complaint made to my office about a retail outlet selling chop-chop which was referred to police, Queensland Health and the Australian Tax Office. Whilst all three agencies have advised that they have or will investigate the allegation, there is a considerable passage of time due to confusion, resourcing and the need for those agencies to collaborate on any investigation going forward.

That passage of time is not without consequences. For example, if chop-chop is being sold by one business and another business is doing the right thing, the compliant business will lose customers, especially during a cost-of-living crisis. In smaller communities the result of that is lost jobs and possibly business closures. All the while the person doing the wrong thing is pocketing a huge profit. As we have seen in other centres, they move in and out of these towns rapidly. They are very mobile and very sophisticated; certainly, they are becoming increasingly so. When we look at the lengths to which some of these dodgy operators are going to to move and sell illicit tobacco products, it is extraordinary. There are significant profits to be made for these people, and that needs to be taken into consideration.

Just like the shadow minister for health said yesterday in her contribution, a major part of whether this bill achieves the desired outcomes or not is dependent solely on resourcing. The importance of that resourcing was highlighted by the committee's recommendation that the government do so. During the committee inquiry, a director of the Townsville Public Health Unit said that its team is completely overwhelmed. It was also highlighted that the cost of implementing these changes is 'way beyond what we have resources for'.

The people of the Burdekin electorate, like all Queenslanders, want the same rules for everyone and want those rules enforced. They will not tolerate this government playing games when it comes to staffing and other resources. Let me be very clear: the implementation of this bill must see additional staff and resources appointed to compliance—additional staff not staff transferred from clinical services and not shared staff; additional staff with the appropriate resources and training to deal with this particular issue.