




Speech By
Jim McDonald

MEMBER FOR LOCKYER

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TOBACCO AND OTHER SMOKING PRODUCTS AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr McDONALD** (Lockyer—LNP) (12.48 pm): It is a pleasure to speak on the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Amendment Bill 2023 today. Before I get to that, I would like to pay respect to Peter and Sarah Milosevic, who were here in the House and were very pleased to hear the introduction of the Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, and not before time. I would like to place on record their appreciation and thanks to the former attorney-general, Shannon Fentiman, for her work on this bill. Unfortunately, they spoke to the government back in 2017 and it fell on deaf ears. Since that time, 15 children and families in the same circumstances in which Peter and Sarah found themselves have lost their lives. Thank you very much. This will see justice for Sophie.

I now turn to the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Amendment Bill. As many others in the House have said, our communities across regional Queensland are really feeling the pinch—I am sure it is the case in other states as well—with shops selling illegal chop-chop tearing apart the economic fabric of our community. I am not a smoker. I did smoke socially years ago. As we have heard, there are \$29 billion of reasons for implementing changes to the smoking regime.

Chop-chop shops across the state are selling cheap product to vulnerable people. From my experience in my communities in Gatton and Laidley, many times that product finds its way into the hands of children. When a government regulates smoking products, as they do, and receive significant taxation, albeit through the federal government, there needs to be significant controls put in place to manage that regulation. As the committee heard through stakeholder engagement, a lot of the control and enforcement of regulations has not occurred. The health department has come to Gatton a couple of times and knocked on the door of a couple of these places. They did write a ticket on one occasion, but when there is a risk of getting a \$375 ticket versus the reward that they are reaping from selling such cheap product to the community then they are back doing it again the next afternoon, if they can get the product.

I would also like to place on record my sincere thanks to Detective Sergeant Brett Richards and his team of the Gatton CIB. After many discussions with IGA and other tobacco retailers in the Lockyer community, Detective Sergeant Richards used his initiative and the Criminal Code of Queensland to charge a number of these offenders—on more than one occasion—for receiving tainted property. If they have illegal chop-chop in their shops then that is an illegally acquired substance. Detective Sergeant Richards has used the law to charge them with the significant offence of receiving tainted property. They have been through the courts and received significant penalties for that. I am sure that if it continues then they will face incarceration.

Whilst I admire Detective Sergeant Richards' initiative and the prosecution of those offenders, this bill will provide another tool in the fight against illicit substances and the use of illicit substances. I have, with Detective Sergeant Richards, asked the Queensland Police Service to look at the initiative that Detective Sergeant Richards showed in the Lockyer communities and to replicate that right across the state. There are conversations happening around that. That will assist police in more communities to be able to take action against these offenders.

Turning to the specifics of this bill, I welcome the balance that the committee has tried to reach in the report and in the bill before the House. The committee stressed—and I want to stress the importance of this as well—that unless the health department and other agencies are resourced properly, as my shadow minister for health articulated yesterday, then it is a waste of time putting these extra controls in place. I ask the government to provide the additional staff needed, particularly in my area of West Moreton. We require an extra two people to be able to assist with the controls provided by this legislation.

I have mentioned IGA and other tobacco retailers in the community. It might astound members of the House to know that we are not talking about \$1,000 or \$2,000 a week in lost revenue. We are talking about \$20,000 or \$30,000 a week in lost revenue—and that is just in my smaller communities. The loss of that money means that jobs are going to be lost. In fact, jobs have been lost in a couple of our shops in town. That is significant for a small community. One or two jobs are very important.

To see the lack of enforcement action on clearly unlawful activity—to see that unlawful activity continuing unabated—and to see genuine businesses who have the protection of the law and the system that is in place undermined in the economy due to the failure of enforcement and the failure of closing these businesses down, it is a really difficult setting for any business to be in. I stress again the importance for the government to make sure that proper resourcing is provided.

I also recognise the challenges that there will be in educating people across the state about these new laws. Businesses and stakeholders have said how difficult it is going to be in regard to additional signage and controlling those safe places where families can go where they will not be subject to secondary smoking and they can be free of smoke of their own choice. I welcome those additional smoke-free environments across the state. That is a great thing, but there needs to be consultation with some of those businesses. Even though we all support the control around those non-smoking areas, it comes at a very large expense when it affects private businesses, hotels and clubs. They may need to set aside additional areas or bring in additional security on some occasions to monitor those spaces to make sure that people are doing the right thing.

The bill, as we have talked about, is mainly focused on the control of illicit substances and other aspects such as additional penalties for breaching those laws. I do need to place on record that this bill does not actually deal with the issue of vapes in the community. We welcome the committee's work in that area. Many people across the state think vapes are a safe form of smoking. That is certainly not the case, as the committee has already heard. I welcome that the committee has published the facts about the chemicals that are contained in some of those products. They are very dangerous. They might not taste like much or they might smell fruity—and they are obviously designed to appeal to a younger audience—but they certainly contain some very dangerous chemicals, as traditional cigarettes do.

It is a pleasure for me to stand and speak about some of the challenges that we face in our community with these things and some of the good work that has been happening, and I also welcome the additional changes with these laws. I stress again that we need to see additional resources and personnel put in place in our West Moreton community. An additional two officers are going to be required to assist with the enforcement of these new laws. I make a plea to the new health minister to see that additional resourcing allocated right across the state. It is a serious issue. It is a huge cost to Queenslanders—\$29 billion. Any efforts that we can make to change the culture and the habits of people for the better will be very welcome.