




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

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TOBACCO AND OTHER SMOKING PRODUCTS AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr SULLIVAN** (Stafford—ALP) (4.20 pm): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker Lui. It is a great honour to be able to call you that here today. I rise to support the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Amendment Bill 2023. This important legislation makes significant reforms to support several elements of our continued efforts to reduce smoking, change behaviour and protect Queenslanders from exposure to second-hand smoke. One of the most important elements of this legislation is the establishment of a licensing scheme for smoking products in both wholesale and retail settings. This will provide Queensland Health with the tools they need to better regulate, delivering several benefits: market equality for legitimate businesses; better identification, including the personalities and/or entities of those involved in these operations; as well as the locations, the community or suburban density of these locations; and a better understanding or oversight of the extensive variety of products involved.

On the ground in my community, there is certainly some local insight on these issues. I have spoken to school educators and students; I have spoken to local health staff. This is a real issue that has moved very rapidly. The dramatic increase in vaping is obviously a deliberate strategy from tobacco companies to target young people and get them hooked. Child focused flavours—from every fruity flavour under the sun to bubblegum and ice cream—are clearly targeted at young people. Tobacco is present in products, even when those products are advertised as ‘nicotine free’. Dodgy operators sell products that include unsafe chemicals as well as products containing illicit tobacco.

We see products, clearly and deliberately designed to target school students, that have the obvious purpose of hiding vaping products—vapes designed to look like USBs or highlighter pens—so that school students can more easily hide them in their school bag or locker or carry them in their pockets. We have even seen cases of students who, after gaining access to these dodgy providers, have tried to onsell vapes to other school students on school property. It is a serious growing trend for our young people that we need to tackle. We need a multipronged approach to prevent the further targeting of our young people as well as to support young people and adults who have already fallen victim to this sort of behaviour.

This bill aims to make it healthier for all people to attend public events such as outdoor markets. It provides clearer and stronger buffer protections at venues like licensed venues in relation to the better location and regulation of designated smoking areas and buffer zones. This makes sense. In terms of outdoor events, why should a parent taking young kids to a local outdoor market be subjected to second-hand smoke either inside the markets themselves or while entering and leaving with their children? Why should it be the responsibility of that parent to try to intervene to stop or suggest the inappropriateness of that behaviour? This legislation provides clear and enforceable parameters for such an event. The reforms extend protection against second-hand smoke to family orientated events or activities focused on young people such as Scouts and Girl Guides.

This bill makes changes for licensed venues in relation to the location of tobacco product, including tobacco product vending machines—again recognising the risk, particularly to reformed smokers, of having tobacco products in people’s faces. In terms of school car parks, many of us who

work closely with local schools would know that most parents would see the school car park as part and parcel of the school property, even if it is council property. Certainly, it is part of day-to-day school operations for parents and students. I support that reform.

In this debate, I think it is important to recognise that we have come a long way. As other speakers have reflected, our smoking rates over generations have reduced significantly. I am old enough to remember when restaurants and licensed venues allowed smoking inside. As a non-smoker you could not help but be exposed to second-hand smoke, with clothes and hair taking on damaging second-hand smoke. As a teenager still in school I worked in hospitality. Staff worked across both the smoking and the so-called non-smoking areas of the restaurant. Of course, the smoking and non-smoking sections of the restaurant were effectively delineated by a pot plant. They shared the same air; they shared the same staff. Obviously as a state we have made significant changes since then.

I reflect—as the minister reflected in her contribution—that this is a policy space where the Commonwealth government plays an important regulatory role. We need that cooperation in order to continue that partnership. I reflect in particular on the work of former federal health minister Nicola Roxon, who did so much in her time to take on the tobacco industry in relation to plain packaging, health warnings and stronger regulation around the selling, promotion and display of tobacco products, particularly in the retail setting. This bill builds on that generation of work while providing better options for the enforcement of Commonwealth regulations and standards. I think that is a very good thing. Penalties have been put in place for operators who do not comply with this new regulation, and that works in several ways. It is a deterrent in its own right as there are significant penalties, but there is also a risk to those parties of future detriment by being refused a licence or having a licence removed. As I said, that helps to create a level playing field for those legitimate operators in the field.

To finish, I would like to thank the former minister for health for the development of this legislation. I thank the now minister for progressing the bill, and I thank the committee chair and members for conducting the inquiry and getting us to where we are today. This bill is an important step in tackling the ongoing challenges that we face as a community in tackling tobacco. That includes existing tobacco products as well as the serious and growing challenge we see with vaping, the deliberate targeting of children and the growing trend of dodgy producers who undermine legitimate retail providers.

I support the reforms to improve public health for those who are already engaged in this health challenge, those we seek to prevent from being at risk of doing the same and those public servants and regulators who are doing their best to pursue that goal. It makes sense to protect the broader community from second-hand smoke in a range of scenarios, all of which I support. I commend the bill to the House.