




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR LOGAN

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TOBACCO AND OTHER SMOKING PRODUCTS AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (5.16 pm): For all my life—I think everyone in this chamber knows—I have known that smoking tobacco causes early death. Yet every day in Queensland a younger person is taking up smoking for the first time, not considering that perhaps their future selves will deeply regret their fitness loss, the cost, their health and, ultimately, the death that smoking causes. While it might be seen as a positive that smoking rates have halved in the last 20 years, we should not forget the half that continue to smoke. Over 400,000 Queenslanders smoke daily. One in 10 adults every day continue to hurt themselves and those around them. We know that many Queenslanders want to quit, but the habitual and addictive nature of smoking make it very difficult for them to take that step.

It is exactly what big tobacco corporations depend on. Possibly even more disturbing is that seven per cent of high schoolers have smoked at least one cigarette in the past seven days. Because the rate of smoking has reduced, one could be forgiven for thinking that death from smoking is mostly behind us. Unfortunately, that is not the case. Because of the 10 per cent of current smokers and the legacy of damage done by past smokers, a recent study by the Cancer Council of New South Wales predicted that cigarette smoking will cause more than 250,000 cancer deaths in Australia from 2020 to 2044. Let me put that in perspective. That is more Australians than those who died serving us in any war—in fact, in all wars put together—and more than the population of Ipswich.

The Chief Health Officer told us that in 2015 the cost of smoking was estimated to be \$137 billion across Australia. That translates proportionately to \$27.4 million based on Queensland's share of the Australian population. The member for Mirani seemed to have an issue with these figures. He said disturbingly—

Given the fact that smokers supposedly die earlier than everyone else, they must logically spend a lot less time on the aged or disability pension and far less time in aged care.

He went on—

Surely this must be saving taxpayers bucketloads of cash.

Firstly, the member misleads the House. It is very easy to see the paper that is the basis for the method of calculating costs. You can look it up in seconds. I say very sincerely that I would discourage any health body from attempting to see an economic benefit from early death. We on this side of the House—and I think most members share this view—have moral values. We value the full living of life, not—as the member for Mirani seems to do—a nihilistic rejection of the value of a life lived fully. I can imagine it would be hard to explain to a teenage son or daughter, as some members in this place spoke about, that health departments failed to find a benefit in their father dying of cancer. Imagine the member for Mirani saying, 'Your father may have died at 60 but'—and I quote him again—'this must be saving taxpayers bucketloads of cash.'

There is a moral value to living life fully. To see a benefit in an untimely death is a rejection of the moral value of life and the moral principles of both humanist and religious thought. The logic seems to be that, as soon as a person is no longer of economically productive value, they must not have intrinsic value and their death should be seen as a saving. This logic must be utterly rejected by this House. We value life. We value a fully lived life. We value the elderly and their participation in Australian society. The value of a grandparent living to care for and pass on life lessons to grandchildren and even great-grandchildren is one of great value in our society.

There are others who take arguments to the extremes of libertarian thought: that personal choice and decisions trump all and the government should have no role except as perhaps an information provider; however, this extremist libertarian ideology does not meet the commonsense test. Some talked about the pub test. Everyone in the front bar of the Logan Village Hotel understands a few facts about smoking that libertarians do not seem to understand. They understand that many smokers take up smoking at a very young age and they are effectively stuck with a habit they almost instantly regret. Nicotine addiction and the habitual nature of lighting up and smoking a cigarette is a hard habit to break. Often young people try and quit the habit just a year after they begin. Research tells us that, on average, smokers attempt to quit eight to 11 times before successfully quitting; that is, most of the smokers that libertarians such as former senator Leyonhjelm think they are supporting have already tried to quit.

Even if smoking was not so dangerously addictive and habit-forming, libertarians would still be wrong. The decision taken by a 15-year-old boy is not consistent with the choice that person would make throughout their life. No 65-year-old suffering from cancer receives any solace from the fact that their 15-year-old self seemingly made a 'free decision' to impress their mates 50 years ago. No son or daughter will get any comfort from that fact at all.

This House supports the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Amendment Bill, which continues to take active steps to further reduce smoking and access to smoking, especially for young people. I endorse this bill and our state and federal governments' goal of eliminating the danger of smoking from our society.