



Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (2.46 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Health and Environment Committee Report No. 38, 57th Parliament—*Vaping: An inquiry into reducing rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland*, tabled on 31 August 2023.

This report was about vaping. We conducted an inquiry into reducing rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland. I start by thanking all of the members of that committee who undertook extensive consultation with the Queensland community on vaping. We know that it is a rife in every single community. There are a number of members of parliament on both sides who also contributed to this inquiry. I will start with a quote from Dr John Gerrard, our Chief Health Officer in Queensland, who said—

This is the time to do something. In five or 10 years time—once it is well and truly established—it is too late ... We cannot ban cigarettes now ... but we have the opportunity to take an aggressive control of this right now. This timing is perfect.

Community consultation informed the committee that there is no doubt that vaping is having a very concerning health impact on young people in Queensland communities. A concerted joint effort between the Commonwealth and state is required to shut down the illegal selling of vapes that are impacting our young people, who perhaps cannot see the ongoing health risks as this trend continues. I echo the comments from the Chief Health Officer.

We made 14 recommendations. I will talk about the first recommendation, which states—

The committee recommends that the Queensland Government investigate establishing a joint task force involving Queensland and Commonwealth agencies with the primary objective of ending the illegal retail supply of e-cigarettes, including online, especially to people under the age of 18.

It is timely that I just received a briefing from health officials during the lunchbreak of progress in that area. I had only just written to the minister to say that we need to double down on our efforts to stop young people getting addicted to nicotine with these multiflavoured, attractive vapes that are available in retail stores and servos.

The tobacco industry is heavily regulated in terms of plain packaging. You cannot buy a packet; they are behind closed doors. Meanwhile, down the road these pop-up stores are addicting the young people in our communities and we need to do everything we can to stop it. It is serendipitous that tomorrow the federal government will move another bill in relation to vaping—of course, it is up to the states to enforce whatever comes out of that—but I note that the Nationals are opposing it. They are not going to support the bill, and that will be an interesting observation for Queensland. We are doing everything we can to stop this. I see these illegal pop-up shops in my local area, as I am sure all local members do. The vaping rates in schools are a result of the number of students gathering and sharing these things. It is unhealthy. They are full of toxins; they are harmful. We will see the outcome of that if we do not do something further.

I have called on both the police minister and health minister to double down on the efforts in my community to shut down those shops that open up just like that. They seize thousands of them. I have reports and updates on how much they have seized in Queensland, but there is more to be done. I look forward to seeing what the Commonwealth does with their bill. There are a couple of things the Queensland government is already doing, including taking action on vaping. We have: \$1.3 million for a new youth focused public health campaign about the harms of vaping; \$3.9 million annually for Quitline to deliver nicotine dependent services to Queensland; \$5 million established for all schools with access to an online interactive program on vaping, alcohol and other drugs to support student wellbeing and engagement from term 4, 2023; and a program to strengthen alcohol and drugs education, inclusive of vaping. That has been made available to Queensland schools and will start early this year.

We have to do more to stop this. The tobacco industry is cleverly trying to make our young people in Queensland addicted to nicotine. Let's double down on our efforts in Queensland.