




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

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**TOBACCO AND OTHER SMOKING PRODUCTS (VAPING) AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr TANTARI** (Hervey Bay—ALP) (6.27 pm): I rise in support of the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Vaping) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. This bill should not be underestimated in terms of its impact on improving the health of many Queenslanders. The alarming dangers that vaping poses to our community and especially our children are serious and are of growing concern to our community across the length and breadth of Queensland. It is our duty to protect the wellbeing and future of our younger generations. Therefore, it is important that we tackle these issues head-on and understand the consequences they have on our society.

This bill we are debating achieves its policy objectives by amending the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998 to ensure that Queensland can effectively enforce the implementation of the Commonwealth ban on the importation, manufacture, supply and commercial possession of all disposable, single-use and recreational vapes and take strong and decisive action to address vaping in Queensland.

There can be no dispute that scientific evidence has proven that tobacco, whilst a legal product, has long been recognised as a major public health concern worldwide. Its devastating impact on individuals, families and communities cannot be overstated.

We must confront the emerging threat of vaping, which has gained popularity among young people in recent years. Vaping, or the use of electronic cigarettes, has been marketed as a safer alternative to traditional smoking. However, mounting evidence suggests that vaping carries its own set of dangers, particularly when it comes to our children.

One of the major concerns is the aggressive marketing and appealing flavours that are specifically targeted at young people. Just type 'vape flavours' into an internet search—the most popular vape juice flavours in Australia include fruity flavours like strawberry, blueberry and mango; dessert flavours like cookie dough and sticky buns; minty menthols; and even savoury liquid flavours such as bacon or cheese. There is no doubt that these flavours are made to entice children and adolescents, creating a new generation of nicotine users—yes, 'nicotine users' because the evidence is clear that the addictive nature of nicotine poses a grave risk as it can lead to long-term dependence and pave the way for future tobacco use.

Preliminary evidence is showing that many vape products currently on the market do not indicate the chemical makeup of the vape consumers are ingesting. To be frank, this is quite alarming. We cannot afford to gamble with the health of our children and adolescents. The precautionary principle must guide our actions, urging us to take preventive measures before it is too late. This legislation is required to stop the accessibility of vaping products. To protect our youth from the dangers of vaping we must take a strict approach, so one of the measures this bill clarifies is that an adult must not supply an illicit nicotine product to a child. The bill creates new offences relating to illicit nicotine products. This term is defined to mean vaping goods, as defined in the Commonwealth bill, and other products

prescribed by regulation. The ability to prescribe products by regulation ensures that novel products, such as nicotine pouches, can be captured within the prohibition as they are developed or as their use becomes commonplace in Queensland.

It is important that we invest in educational campaigns that educate our children, parents and teachers about the dangers of vaping, equipping them with accurate information that debunks the misconceptions surrounding e-cigarettes and empowering them to make informed decisions. I congratulate Queensland Health for introducing a 'There's Nothing Sweet About Vapes' campaign to specifically target young people on social media platforms to highlight the harmful chemicals and health effects. I also know that Queensland Health and Education Queensland have implemented a new Pathway to Cessation program to promote working collaboratively to develop and implement a pilot vaping-tobacco smoking cessation support program for secondary school students aged 12 to 18 and to support vaping cessation in Queensland secondary schools.

When it comes to the electorate of Hervey Bay, I am reliably informed that vaping is taking place in schools, as it is across all of our electorates, as well as at home and in the community, with children as young as six or seven years of age vaping. This is a shocking fact. This is alarming, given there is currently no real long-term evidence to show what vaping—ingesting smoke into young lungs—will do to the development of internal organs over time. We can draw a comparison on the research done on tobacco smoke ingestion. Medical science is saying that it looks as though there will be little difference with vaping.

I am really concerned at the level of medical conditions that vaping is going to be presenting to the community in the next 10 to 20 years, let alone the impact on a child's health during their development. I say to our kids: smoking or vaping is not cool, or however you want to express it these days. It just is not.

I cannot commend this bill strongly enough and I ask all members in this House to support this bill. This legislation will create a healthier state. It will further strengthen the protection of our children from the dangers of a potential lifelong addiction to substances that damage their health and bring premature death.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work done by the former and current ministers for health, the committee and the committee secretariat in reviewing this legislation. I support this very timely bill before the House.