




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Record of Proceedings, 17 April 2024

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (2.42 pm): I, too, rise to contribute to the examination of the parliamentary Health and Environment Committee's report titled *Vaping: An inquiry into reducing rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland*. I thank the committee for investigating this very important issue. On behalf of my community I was pleased to make a submission to that inquiry addressing the impact of vaping across my electorate. Like we have heard in this chamber today, it is prevalent across the state. It is increasing in a manner that none of us are satisfied or happy with. In fact, we would like to see it gone altogether.

My submission focused on the prevalence of e-cigarette use amongst children and young people, particularly in and around schools. The member for Macalister summed it up very well when she talked about the ability to purchase e-cigarettes and vapes right near school grounds. It is really quite disturbing. My submission focused on the risks of harmful chemicals contained in those e-cigarettes and the approaches being taken in our schools to discourage the uptake of vaping. We know and we have heard all the statistics in the chamber today about how harmful this is. We do not know what is in e-cigarettes. We know there is nicotine; that has certainly been proven.

I want to read a passage into the record, particularly for my constituents, from the submission of Chief Health Officer Dr John Gerrard. It is such a telling quote. He stated—

... 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.

I really do want to associate my contribution with those comments because it is so imperative that we do put a stop to this horrific, addictive act by so many young kids. As the member for Warrego said, vapes can look like a fluoro or highlighter pen. It is really getting out of control. People are sitting in classrooms basically putting the vape in their mouth and hiding the smoke down their shirt.

In many regional towns many local agents have said to me that there are more vape shops popping up in the towns than any other commercial business. I know in Kingaroy in particular, with a population of just over 10,000 people, access to e-cigarettes is commonplace. Three specialist vape stores opened just last year alone. Those stores have an ATM machine at the door. They only accept cash and they willingly serve young people in school uniform. This is the practice that must stop. It simply must stop. We need to ensure there is someone going to these shops and actively shutting them down.

I also want to note the brazen use of vapes and e-cigarettes in the classrooms while the teachers are not looking. I want to put on record the toll that this is taking on the teachers and administrative staff in schools. It is creating an extra burden on those teachers and school staff because they are doing everything they can to restrict what is a banned activity. It is banned, but it is so easily accessible. They are really fighting an uphill battle. It is really sad that young people are either oblivious or unaware of

the health impacts of vaping. I do welcome the Department of Education's advice to the committee that a revised alcohol and other drugs education program will be available early this year and that will cover specific vaping topics. Let's hope that hits the target where it needs to.

Finally, I refer to the Speaker's statement on 16 April concerning correspondence from the Leader of the House. This was the first time this matter had been brought to my attention. In response to Mr Speaker's request, I correct the record. I advise that I should have ensured my social media post referred to the fact that 18 of the 19 ministers did not make ministerial statements on the day in question. I have removed the social media post.