




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Record of Proceedings, 5 March 2024

ADJOURNMENT

Unlicensed Tobacco Shops

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (7.06 pm): I want to ask when this state Labor government is going to do something about the proliferation of organised crime in the form of unlicensed tobacco shops in my electorate and throughout the state.

Mrs Frecklington: Hear, hear!

Mr LISTER: I take that acknowledgement from the member for Nanango. Legitimate businesses in my electorate of Southern Downs and elsewhere are suffering a loss of trade to these chop-chop shops, when they are paying licensing fees to be a licensed retailer for tobacco products. These unlicensed retailers are selling vapes, there is no excise on the products they sell, they are paying no tax, there are obvious biosecurity concerns about what is coming in through the back door and is not being checked, and kids are buying tobacco products at these places. If these retailers are happy to trade unlicensed, they are unlikely to be concerned about transgressing against the law about selling cigarettes, tobacco products or vapes to minors.

I have already written to the minister. I got a reply back from her, which I will acknowledge, but she basically told me to go to the state government website and report it. Many of my electors in Southern Downs have put in complaints about these places, but very little action is taken by Queensland Health under the new powers that this government put through for itself.

I will read into the record a number of establishments which have proliferated. We had two last time we spoke in the House about this matter and now there are five. There is: the Goondiwindi Tobacco shop at 111 Marshall Street, Goondiwindi; AJ Tobacconist at 111 Palmerin Street, Warwick; Warwick Tobacconist Gifts & Convenience Store at 2/105 Palmerin Street, Warwick—they are even on the internet and have their little shop marked on Google Maps; the Axen tobacco shop at 7 Rogers Street, Stanthorpe; and a new unlicensed tobacconist on High Street, Stanthorpe, not far from being opposite the Victoria Street intersection.

When Queensland Health do respond to the complaints that they have been getting, they invariably go in and confiscate some stock or begin proceedings against some minor offender who is behind the counter. However, they are not doing what it takes to stamp this out for good. When you are dealing with organised crime, you have to hit them hard. I wrote to the health minister and I said that you have to go after the landlords, because there is not a landlord or an agent of a landlord who has seen these premises in recent times who could possibly be unaware of the purposes for which they are being used. In fact one complainant said to me that the landlord of an illegal tobacconist rejoiced in it and said, 'It's a good business. It makes lots of money, so I'll be sure to have a good tenant there.' If landlords are prosecuted for being culpably involved in the sale of unlawful tobacco products, then landlords will very quickly stop renting their premises and we will not have them opening up again after a couple of hours following a Queensland Health raid.