



Speech By  
**James Lister**


**MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 April 2024

**HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (2.26 pm): I am very pleased to make a contribution to the debate on this particular committee report. I note that the chair's summary at the beginning said—

As Chair, I echo the view of Queensland's Chief Health Officer, Dr John Gerrard—now is the time to act—if not we will face a generation of nicotine-addicted adults in the years to come. We have an absolute responsibility to address this issue now.

I cannot agree more with that particular statement.

If I could give some context for my electors in Southern Downs, I have risen in this House on more occasions than I can remember and I have written to the government on several occasions to complain about a lack of action in enforcing the new laws that the government gave Queensland Health to crack down on illegal tobacco sales and the characters who are involved in that. These businesses, which spring up like mushrooms—I think I heard the member for Warrego say that they just spring up—are unafraid of Queensland Health. I have been told by sources in my electorate that the Queensland Health inspectors do not like going into the illegal chop-chop shops because they are a bit scary. They are scary because they are run by organised crime. However, the inspectors have been given the powers and they wear the badge; it is time that Queensland Health did something about this.

I have complained many times about the number of outlets in my electorate, and I will again read into the record the places where illegal chop-chop shops are that I know of. Maybe even more have sprung up in the time since I compiled this list: the Goondiwindi tobacco shop at 111 Marshall Street, Goondiwindi; AJ Tobacconist at Warwick, 111 Palmerin Street; the Warwick Tobacconist Gifts & Convenience at 2/105 Palmerin Street; the Axon tobacco shop at 7 Rogers Street, Stanthorpe; and a new one, Zaba tobacconist between 143 and 145 High Street, Stanthorpe.

One of the most disgraceful things in this business occurred last week involving a very angry proprietor of a legitimate tobacco business—Tobacco Station in Stanthorpe—who works hard to make a living for himself, employ people and generate taxes to pay for all of the things that we administer. A complaint came in that they were selling vapes, and Queensland Health remarkably, because it does not seem that they are usually so responsive, went down on them like a tonne of bricks—went through them, wanted to see everything and gave them a hard time. The proprietor, not unreasonably, who has been asking me to raise this matter, was very unhappy about that and they were even further incensed at the insouciance of the Queensland Health inspectors who were utterly uninterested in the illegal tobacco business openly trading 50 metres down the street.

This stinks of a Labor Party announcement with no follow-through. I say it again: it stinks of a Labor Party announcement with no follow-through. These places have been trading openly. The people in my electorate cannot fail to find them, yet apparently the Queensland Health inspectors are unable to crack down on these places. It is a disgrace. The government is responsible for this and something needs to be done.

The proceeds of these businesses are used to invest in other illegitimate businesses—organised crime. We are talking about extortion, prostitution, drugs and loan sharking. There is strong evidence to suggest that these illegal shops are selling vapes—we know they are—and selling drugs. I say this to Queensland Health, the minister who is responsible and this government: they should get themselves in order and start cracking down on these practices instead of talking about it. I see the former minister over there. I am glad she is listening to what I have to say, because this is unacceptable. It is an open suggestion that there must be corrupt tolerance of these businesses going on where no action happens, yet when one complaint comes in of a legitimate business selling vapes—which happened to be untrue—Queensland Health comes down on them like a tonne of bricks. I am speaking for my communities and for the small businesses that are disadvantaged by this laxity by Queensland Health. I say again in this House that something needs to be done.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr LISTER:** I think the fact that anybody on the other side of the House should interject is a mark of shame, because everybody in this House has been falling over themselves to say that they are against the trade of illegal tobacco—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hart): Pause the clock. Members, the member for Southern Downs is entitled to give his speech in silence, so I would ask for silence from my right please.

**Mr LISTER:** Everybody in this House is falling over themselves to say that they detest the trade in illegal tobacco, they do not want vapes, they do not want kids to be having them and that we should do something about this, yet I am copping interjections when I am raising the legitimate interests of my electorate. I have had complaints from all over my electorate, including—

**Mr Kelly** interjected.

**Mr LISTER:** The member for Greenslopes continues to interrupt me. Perhaps he enjoys supporting the tobacco industry or maybe the organised crime that goes on around it.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock.

**Mr KELLY:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. That is a ridiculous statement. I take personal offence.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Resume your seat. Members, we will not have an argument across the chamber. Member for Southern Downs, I ask you to withdraw that comment please.

**Mr LISTER:** I withdraw. This government has nothing to be smug about. They have done almost nothing to stamp out the illegal trade in tobacco from illegal tobacco shops—

*(Time expired)*