



Speech By  
**James Martin**


**MEMBER FOR STRETTON**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 April 2024

## **HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

### **Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Mr MARTIN** (Stretton—ALP) (2.01 pm): I rise to support the Health and Environment Committee Report No. 38, 57th Parliament, tabled on 31 August. I would like to start by thanking the committee, which conducted extensive consultation and heard from many different witnesses. I also acknowledge the work of the committee chair, the member for Thuringowa, who has taken a great interest in this particular issue and has been a champion for people's safety. I also understand he may or may not have been a paramedic.

The vaping inquiry into reducing rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland has been very informative, especially looking into the use by young people, school-aged children and First Nations communities as well as its links with mental illness. All members of this House, I am sure, would have heard concerns from their local constituents about vaping. I myself have spoken to mums, dads, grandparents and carers, and it has come up at P&C meetings. I have spoken about it with teachers and many more.

Over the last few years, the take-up of e-cigarettes has increased dramatically. Concerningly, a significant portion of people use both e-cigarettes and tobacco, and there is strong evidence that e-cigarettes pose a serious risk to health. They contain nicotine, a range of harmful chemicals, heavy metals, pesticides and other carcinogenic substances. They come in a range of flavours that appeal to kids, such as bubblegum, fruit, chocolate and mint flavours. I acknowledge also that many in the community claim that they find e-cigarettes helpful as a smoking cessation tool. That has been put to me quite a number of times. The committee considered this information and the committee heard witnesses who said as much; however, the committee noted that the evidence on its effectiveness was uncertain, especially when you look at not only smoking cessation but also harm. That is, how long someone smokes and the harm that it causes.

The committee also found that quite a few of the vapes and disposal vapes that said that they did not contain any nicotine actually did contain nicotine, which we know is highly addictive, and they also contain a whole range of other toxins. Young people are vaping thinking that they will not get hooked or that they are somehow safe; however, they are actually going to end up getting addicted. That is a real risk to Queensland. It is a real risk to young people in Queensland. We could have a whole generation of people addicted to nicotine.

I want to acknowledge some of the public servants who are working very hard analysing and testing these vapes. I want to give a special shout-out to senior chemist David Pass, based in Nathan at the John Tonge Centre next to the QEII Hospital. He is part of the team that carries out the tests on these vapes, and the Queensland research suggests that over 85 per cent of vapes sold contain two to six per cent of nicotine. That is massive, and that is something that all members, I am sure, are very concerned about. The TGA have also listed further prohibitive compounds which they have found inside some vapes.

If we could go back in time to when cigarettes became commercially available, which resulted in millions of people becoming addicted and, ultimately, millions of people killed, I am sure we would have never allowed it. In some respects, this committee report considers that we are in a similar situation—we have a window of opportunity at this time to have an impact on reducing the uptake of e-cigarettes and the long-term health consequences that will have. Some of the other evidence that the committee heard was that we do not know what some of these long-term consequences might be—what might happen to young people in 20 or 30 years, what kinds of conditions they might come down with as a result of the long-term damage that they are doing to themselves and to their lungs.

The committee also supports the Australian government laws that have been introduced for stronger regulation and enforcement banning disposal vapes and stopping their sale in retail stores and also to impose control on imports. I also acknowledge the need for federal and state governments to work together and that the No. 1 recommendation, which I think is great, is for the establishment of a taskforce, which would include the AFP, Queensland Police, Queensland Health and Border Force coming together to work to reduce e-cigarettes.

*(Time expired)*