




Speech By
Jimmy Sullivan

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Record of Proceedings, 17 April 2024

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr SULLIVAN** (Stafford—ALP) (2.21 pm): I rise to endorse the report from the committee. I was not on the committee, but I want to thank them for their work because I believe that reducing the rates of vaping is very important. I speak as a parent of teenagers and school-aged kids, but, more broadly, I work very closely with my local schools, particularly the high schools, both state and private, and it has been raised with me on many occasions by principals, leadership teams, teachers and parents as a growing problem. I associate myself with comments made by other members on both sides of the House in terms of the importance of this issue, and I wanted to add my voice to that argument.

We know that serious health issues stem from this growing trend involving dangerous chemicals, the nicotine when it is advertised that there is no nicotine, and, most sadly to me, the deliberate and obvious targeting of young people with the flavours that are used. As speakers have said, e-cigarettes shaped like USB sticks or highlighter pens are deliberately designed to target children. Let's be honest: when we are talking about school students, we are talking about children. It is indefensible, in my view, for children to be advertised to, sold to and addicted to this horrendous trend in our community. I really thank the committee for their extensive work.

As the member for Stretton said, we can look back to times when we have legislated on really important issues. I think it was Nicola Roxon, the Commonwealth health minister at the time, who took on the big tobacco companies when it came to plain packaging and when it came to the prevention of the display of cigarettes, whether it be at a petrol station or at a tobacconist, to try to stop the naturalisation of smoking. I think we need to stop the naturalisation of vaping that is unfortunately really taking over our community, particularly our young people. There are important steps that people can take, like the Australian Labor Party, from decades ago now, refusing donations from the cigarette industry. A stance such as that is a really important signal and a really important principle that we need to pursue.

I look forward to the work of the taskforce. I think we need to work with a combination of the health workforce and the law enforcement workforce, but also in collaboration with the Commonwealth because this has to be a joint effort. Surely we all agree that this is a stain on our society that we need to address and whatever we can do will be really important. What was really important about this particular committee report was the detail and research that went into it. It was evidence-based and the recommendations reflect that.

Again, I think it is outrageous that shops, particularly dodgy shops, are deliberately targeting our young people with vapes of bubblegum and raspberry flavours designed to look like a USB stick or a highlighter pen. There is no excuse for that behaviour.

Thank you to the committee for their report. Thank you to the department that did a huge amount of work behind the scenes. Likewise, thank you to the secretariat for helping to prepare this report. Again, I look forward to seeing what comes from the work of the taskforce and I commend the committee report to the House.