




Speech By
Laura Gerber

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (2.57 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the committee's report titled *Vaping: An inquiry into reducing rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland*. As many members across the chamber have said during this debate, vaping is a huge issue in our communities and it is a really big issue in our schools right now. I want to speak to recommendations 6 and 7 of the committee report, which talk about developing guidelines for Queensland schools in relation to interventions, and identifying and supporting students who are using vapes or have a nicotine dependency. I want to talk about that in particular to highlight one of my wonderful schools, Elanora State High School, and the work that it is doing in this area.

Elanora State High School is uniquely tackling the scourge of vaping in our community. For much of 2022, the staff at Elanora State High School adopted a zero tolerance approach to vaping. As a result of that zero tolerance approach, many students who were caught were suspended immediately. The policy resulted in around 52 students being suspended and a huge plumbing bill for the school because students would flush their vapes down the toilets. Principal Rochelle Lewis said that, in 23 years as a principal, she had never before encountered such a problem. The continued rate of suspensions became unsustainable so she came up with an innovative way of dealing with the problem in her school.

Ms Lewis, parents and teachers came together and decided that those punitive measures were not sustainable. They decided that an educational approach was preferable. They came up with a process that involved the students. They came up with a 70-minute education session to educate students on how harmful vaping is. If students were caught vaping, they came up with a way to allow those students to complete that two-week program.

Recommendation 8 of the committee report talks about the Queensland government supporting the implementation of measures to stop the importation of non-prescription e-cigarettes. I note that many of the cigarettes that were found and tested at Elanora State High School actually did contain nicotine. The fact that we are talking about prescription and non-prescription in this space is a little irrelevant, because we know that many of these e-cigarettes that are imported and are claiming to be nicotine-free, that are claiming to be able to be sold legally, in fact contain nicotine and are extremely harmful. I have a number of wonderful initiatives that I want to talk about in relation to Elanora State High School, which I will continue with when the debate resumes.