




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BAILLIE** (Townsville—LNP) (5.26 pm): I rise to make a modest contribution to the Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. The Crisafulli government is committed to strengthening the performance, accountability and integrity of our health system while also taking decisive action to protect public health. The Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 reflects both these commitments by ensuring stronger clinical representation on hospital and health boards and by enhancing enforcement powers to respond to the growing harm of vaping goods and other unlawful smoking products. Today I am going to focus my contribution on amendments associated with illegal tobacco products.

The sale of illicit tobacco, vapes and other nicotine products grew significantly under Labor, with hundreds of illegal stores operating in plain sight. I would like to take a moment to reflect on vapes. Vapes pose a serious health risk due to harmful chemicals and nicotine addiction. They can damage lungs, increase heart disease risk and expose users to toxic substances like heavy metals. Long-term effects remain uncertain and youth are especially vulnerable to addiction.

Unlike cigarettes, vapes comes in flavours like fruit, candy and watermelon, making vaping more appealing to children. Under Labor's watch, vaping rates amongst Queensland high school students tripled between 2017 and 2023. We have heard stories of children as young as six being caught vaping at schools as well as teenagers admitting they are so addicted to vapes that they suffer withdrawal symptoms, including anxiety and headaches, unless they sneak puffs inside their classroom behind the teacher's back.

In addition to vapes being accessible to students through illegal stores, they can also be easily concealed. Many vapes come in novelty designs that appeal to children while others are packaged and cleverly designed to avoid easy detection, making it nearly impossible for parents and teachers to identify a vape and intervene early. Unfortunately, vapes are finding their way into my schools in Townsville. Of concern, according to the Cancer Council Queensland's submission to the committee inquiry, young children who vape are 29 times more likely to subsequently try cigarettes.

Labor's failure to tackle the illicit tobacco and vape market risks putting decades of public health progress at risk. We recognise that the most effective way to combat vaping is to focus on the supply. Since the Crisafulli government was elected, Queensland Health has seized more than 250,000 vapes and, under the Crisafulli government, Queensland led the largest seizure of illegal cigarettes and vapes by any health authority in Australia. One operation raided more than 30 premises, resulting in the seizure of 76,000 vapes, 19 million cigarettes and 3.6 tonnes of loose tobacco. However, our enforcement success means that we are facing growing logistical challenges in storing and destroying these hazardous items. Currently seized vapes must be stored for a minimum of eight weeks to accommodate existing forfeiture, show cause and appeal processes. During this period, the risk of fires, toxic leaks and environmental contamination is significant and the storage costs are high. To address these issues, this bill enables the immediate forfeiture of seized vaping goods, allowing for the destruction of these illicit products without delay.

Additionally, the bill introduces a new court ordered cost recovery mechanism. This will ensure that those who profit from the unlawful sale of products such as vapes, illicit tobacco and ice pipes can be held financially accountable for the costs they impose due to their illegal conduct. Courts will be given the clear authority to order convicted offenders to pay the costs of enforcement, including seizure, storage, destruction, investigation and prosecution. Vapes pose real health risks to our next generation the extent of which is currently unknown. This bill will strengthen Queensland Health's ability to take action against the illegal supply and possession of vaping products. I commend this bill to the House.