



Speech By
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TOBACCO AND OTHER SMOKING PRODUCTS (DISMANTLING ILLEGAL TRADE) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

 **Miss DOOLAN** (Pumicestone—LNP) (5.12 pm): Today I rise to speak on the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Dismantling Illegal Trade) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. It is a critical step in dismantling the organised black market in illegal tobacco, vaping products and now nitrous oxide across Queensland and one that delivers enormous protections for communities like Pumicestone. Illegal tobacco is not just a nuisance. It is traded in a sophisticated, profitable and harmful black market that undermines public health, cheats taxpayers, exploits vulnerable people and places local small businesses at an unfair disadvantage.

In communities like mine, small retailers are doing the right thing: complying with regulations, checking IDs and paying their fair share. However, for years now, retailers from Bribie Island to Beachmere have been raising the alarm about illegal tobacco being sold through unregulated pop-up shops and covert operations. Bongaree shop owners have reported suspicious behaviour. Convenience stores in Ningi and Sandstone Point have seen customers being approached by illegal sellers. It is real and it is growing. Small business owners should not have to compete with criminals selling dangerous, unregulated products out of car boots, back rooms or under-the-counter networks. I have even met with landlords who have seen their insurance premiums skyrocket merely because their premises are leased to legitimate tobacconists, forcing them to evict good tenants. Enough is enough.

Queensland already had some of the toughest penalties in the nation, but the illegal market continues to evolve. Enforcement efforts have been hindered by lengthy prosecutions, resource-intensive investigations and limited powers to shut down illegal operators and keep them shut. This bill changes that. Currently, under Labor's old laws, illegal traders could only be shut down for 72 hours, effectively a long weekend off. Under this bill, interim closure orders will expand to three months, giving Queensland Health the ability to shut down rogue traders immediately and for long enough to hit them where it hurts: their profits. Long-term closure orders will double from six months to 12 months and it will be a criminal offence for anyone to open, trade or even work from a business subject to a closure order. Closed means closed. For the first time, Queensland will directly address the role of commercial landlords who knowingly profit from the black market. Landlords who knowingly permit illegal tobacco or vaping activity will face penalties of up to \$166,900, or one year's imprisonment, and over \$834,000 for corporations. Those who turn a blind eye will face similarly significant civil penalties.

This bill also gives responsible landlords what they have been begging for: a statutory power to terminate leases when premises are subject to a closure order. This means criminal enterprises can be evicted and prevented from re-establishing shopfronts. This is a massive win for landlords in Pumicestone, who have told me firsthand how trapped they felt under the previous system. A key

strength of this bill is the introduction of compromised goods, legal smoking products found alongside illicit tobacco or nicotine products. These goods will now be seized immediately. This dismantles the 'dual business model' where criminals hide illegal trade behind seemingly legitimate front-of-shop stock.

Queensland Health officers will finally have the power to run covert 'mystery shopper' operations to catch illegal retailers red-handed. This aligns us with proven enforcement models used in alcohol and tobacco compliance across Australia. The bill introduces executive officer liability, ensuring company directors cannot hide behind complex business structures to avoid prosecution. If the company is guilty, directors are deemed to be guilty unless they can prove they took reasonable steps to prevent the conduct.

I particularly welcome the minister's amendments to address the rising scourge of nitrous oxide misuse. Nitrous oxide has legitimate medical and hospitality uses, but recreational misuse is dangerous. Young people mistakenly believe nangs are safe because they are cheap and accessible. In reality, they can cause severe neurological, cardiovascular and psychiatric harm and, in extreme cases, paralysis or even death. A recent sample of inspections found around 78 per cent of illicit tobacconists stocking nangs, often right alongside illegal vapes and tobacco. Families in my electorate have raised serious concerns about the easy availability of nangs in our community. These retailers—gift stores, convenience shops and illicit tobacconists—have no legitimate reason to stock them. The amendment will classify nitrous oxide bulbs and canisters as compromised goods, allowing them to be seized when found with illicit tobacco or nicotine products. It also introduces a regulation-making power so that other emerging harmful products can be rapidly added in the future. Criminals adapt and now Queensland will be able to adapt just as quickly.

This bill is fundamentally about protecting Queenslanders. Tobacco remains the No. 1 cause of cancer in Queensland. Meanwhile, vapes are hooking young people into lifelong nicotine addiction with products laced with toxic chemicals, antifreeze, industrial solvents and even nitazenes, a synthetic opioid 500 times more potent than heroin. Illegal tobacco and vaping products threaten to undo decades of public health progress. The people of Bribie Island, Toorbul and Caboolture want safer communities where their children are protected, not targeted by criminal networks. I commend the bill to the House.