



Speech By  
**Donna Kirkland**


**MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON**

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

**Second Reading**

 **Mrs KIRKLAND** (Rockhampton—LNP) (8.45 pm): I rise to speak to the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Dismantling Illegal Trade) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. From the outset, I commend the Minister for Health, his team, the Health, Environment and Innovation Committee and, indeed, the department who have all worked together to bring this bill to parliament.

**A government member:** Best health minister in 10 years.

**Mrs KIRKLAND:** He is the best health minister in 10 years. This bill will send a strong message to all illegal tobacco traders and all complicit enablers that this criminal activity is not welcome in Queensland. My community has been crying out for intervention—intervention that, until the Crisafulli government, has been greatly lacking in terms of delivering results. Make no mistake: this is organised crime reaching into our communities and targeting our local business districts, our vulnerable families and, most appallingly, our children. The unashamed fancy packaging and pretty aroma additives mask the underlying toxic contents, some of which have been found to contain opioids 500 times more powerful than heroin. This shameful illegal trade is drawing in our children by the score.

The measures within this bill should have been introduced years ago but alas the previous government's soft-on-crime approach allowed the illegal tobacco industry to grow exponentially, subject only to the equivalent of a mere slap on the wrist. It has taken the Crisafulli government to provide the firm legislative action that our Queensland communities have been demanding. Those are communities such as my electorate of Rockhampton and Gracemere. Our regional community, often considered less vulnerable to the infiltration of organised crime, unfortunately has been targeted by those illegal profiteers, with multiple tobacco shops having set up in the area over the last 10 years. Across our business districts, the illegal tobacco shops are easily identified by the loitering of customers who spill out over the footpaths adjacent to their open doors, which invite patrons to enter and experience what can only be described as the spider's web. It is an invitation that will hold customers hostage and, ultimately, lead to addictions that literally take lives.

For over 15 years I have worked alongside an incredible group of local community, volunteering and raising money each year for cancer research and investment through the Cancer Council Queensland. Recently, Cancer Council Queensland CEO, Matt Gardiner, visited Rockhampton to congratulate and honour some of these community volunteers—volunteers who are mostly motivated by personal intersection with the insidiousness of cancer, including cancers caused by tobacco and like substances. Cancer Council Queensland have been a part of the fight against cigarette and tobacco use over the decades with their advocacy, and Queensland had seen a significant decline in the prevalence of smoking over that time, that is, until the era of vapes and the emergence of this illegal

tobacco trade. Matt Gardiner, the Cancer Council Queensland CEO, commended the government's introduction of this nation-leading bill as a vital step to protecting public health, helping prevent cancer and other chronic diseases.

In my hometown of Rockhampton, parents are devastated when they discover that their child has fallen victim to the vaping trend. In 2023, in a school incident, 35 students were expelled from a local school in Rockhampton after they had fallen for the attractive packaging and social trends. The incident alerted residents to the extent to which this illegal trading had infiltrated our community.

Since coming to office, the Crisafulli government has cracked down on rogue traders harder than any government before it or elsewhere in Australia. In our first full year in office, we have seized more than 57 million illicit cigarettes, 7.7 tonnes of loose tobacco, 470,000 illicit vapes and 405,000 nicotine pouches. That is more than \$75 million worth of dangerous goods off the streets. We have issued 219 total interim closures for 72 hours. That is a total of 657 days of closures across the state. Under our new interim closure powers, this would have been more than 19,000 days of closures.

In April we introduced the nation's highest penalty infringement notices, including for vapes and nicotine pouches, which did not exist under those opposite. We have issued more than 1,800 penalty infringement notices. In Central Queensland illicit seizures included four million cigarettes, 615 kilograms of loose tobacco, 24,382 vapes, 65,797 nicotine pouches and a total of 160 penalty infringement notices. Overall, the state has seen more than \$60 million in fines hitting illegal traders where it hits most—their hip pocket. Just this week, media reported how a Central Queensland tobacconist has been fined almost \$1.5 million plus and just shy of \$6,500 in costs for charges related to the sale of illegal tobacco and related products. Raids were conducted throughout August as part of Operation Backburn.

Now we take that crackdown on illegal tobacco and other smoking products to the next level to ensure even stronger protections for public health and safety, answering the call from families and businesses across Queensland to please do something. The Commonwealth government also has a role to play in this rise in the illegal tobacco trade in our communities and it is time they also introduced reforms and protections to stop the illegal products from entering our country in the first place.

Business owners have also reached out to me calling for these stronger laws as they are suffering with increases in petty crime and vagrancy directly related to the areas where these tobacco shops have set up their trade. To these businesses in Rockhampton and Gracemere, know that this bill gets serious on the criminal activities of the illegal tobacco and smoking products trade that you have been witnessing.

Under the current laws introduced by Labor, authorities can only impose a temporary store shutdown lasting three days. This bill proposes significantly tougher measures, granting Queensland Health the authority to close down illegal businesses for up to three months without the need for court approval. It also increases the potential length of court mandated closures, doubling the maximum from six months to a full year. These enhanced powers aim to disrupt illegal operations by cutting off their ability to trade and directly impacting their financial gains. Furthermore, it becomes a criminal offence to reopen and conduct business or even work at a location under a closure order, reinforcing the principle that a closed business must remain closed.

I will briefly address the amendments to this bill foreshadowed today that look to provide clear mechanisms to reduce access to nitrous oxide bulbs and canisters for recreational use. While responsible retailers have taken action to implement measures that make it more difficult for our children to access gas canisters commonly used for inhalation, these illegal retailers of tobacco and other smoking products are now also selling nitrous oxide for recreational use. This is outrageous.

The organised crime groups, complicit retailers, complicit landlords and company fronts that peddle this illegal rubbish to our communities are predators that now, thanks to this bill, will receive the message that their chop-chop shops are about to get the chop. I welcome this bill. I look forward to seeing our communities rid of this insidious trade. I commend the bill to the House.