



Speech By
Hermann Vorster

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

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HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr VORSTER** (Burleigh—LNP) (7.43 pm): I rise to speak in strong support of the Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. This is a bill grounded in reform and focused on results. It delivers on clear election commitments because it empowers clinicians. It removes dangerous products from our communities and, most importantly, it reflects the priorities of the people of Queensland.

The first key reform in this bill ensures that at least one member of every hospital and health board is a clinician employed or engaged by the local hospital and health service. That is a fundamental shift, away from bureaucratic tokenism toward local, practical experience. It means voices from the front line will now sit at the table, not just to be heard but to actually shape decisions.

Importantly, this reform delivers on our election commitment to put doctors, nurses and clinical staff back in charge of hospitals. It reflects the values in our Easier Access to Health Services Plan and underlines this government's belief in genuine clinical leadership, not just symbolism. We are empowering those who treat patients daily to help set direction for how services are delivered locally. We are doing so with integrity. That is why this bill also prevents these clinicians from being appointed as chair or deputy chair of their boards, avoiding potential conflicts of interest while preserving their voice in the boardroom.

This government listens to the front line, something the former Labor government consistently failed to do. They had nine years to fix the boards. Instead, too often clinicians were used for appearances rather than influence. Our approach is different. We respect their professionalism and we trust their judgement. I can say from personal experience, after countless hours of doorknocking in Burleigh, Palm Beach and Varsity Lakes, I have met many incredible health workers. These are people with ideas, with insight and with a genuine passion for improving patient care. These are not just clinicians, they are natural leaders. This bill gives them the opportunity to help shape decisions that affect the way we deliver care in their own community.

The second major part of this bill, something I am very passionate about, tackles a growing scourge in our communities: illicit vaping and illegal tobacco. This government will not stand by while criminal enterprises exploit children for profit. Since 1 October 2024, more than 150,000 illegal vapes have been seized. In just the first quarter of 2025, more than 81,000 more were confiscated. These products are dangerous: they contain lithium-ion batteries that can explode, they leak toxic chemicals, and they are marketed to children with bright colours and sweet flavours.

Under the former government, these stores were allowed to flourish. They appeared in plain sight in neighbourhood centres and suburban strips, preying on young Queenslanders. Labor let it happen. This government will not.

The message is loudest from our youngest voices. Just today, I hosted the year 6 leaders of Burleigh Heads State School. When asked about vaping, they were emphatic. They told me they hated vapes and wanted them gone. That kind of clarity coming from an 11-year-old says it all. If they can see

the danger, so must this House. That is why this bill empowers the Chief Executive of Queensland Health to immediately forfeit and destroy seized vaping goods, without delay. No more eight-week storage windows. No more show cause delays for clearly illicit products.

We have also included robust safeguards to ensure legitimate therapeutic products, such as those available through pharmacies, are not affected. Enforcement officers must reasonably believe an item is linked to an offence under the act, and individuals who are wrongly impacted retain the right to pursue compensation through the courts.

We are already seeing results. In my own electorate, at least one tobacconist, operating on James Street in Burleigh, has been shut down. That is not a coincidence. It is the result of the prospect of clear laws, stronger enforcement and the kind of firm and assertive public messaging that leaves no room for ambiguity.

I want to place on record my thanks to the health minister, the Hon. Tim Nicholls, for his leadership in this space. His clarity, his conviction and his follow-through are already making a tangible difference, not just in policy but on the streets of communities just like mine. His work sets the tone for a government that is not afraid to act and not afraid to back words with actual enforcement.

This bill also includes an important new principle: if you profit from illegal activity, you should not leave taxpayers to pick up the tab. Under the reforms in this bill, courts will be empowered to order offenders to repay the state for the cost of investigating, seizing, storing and destroying illegal tobacco and vaping products. These are not trivial sums. The storage facilities alone cost up to \$65,000 each. The work is dangerous, and the burden on the system is growing. This cost should not be borne by Queenslanders doing the right thing; it should be borne by those knowingly breaking the law. This change is fair, is proportionate, is overdue and treats Queensland taxpayers with respect.

This is a practical bill. It protects young Queenslanders. It empowers clinicians and it delivers on our commitments. It is precisely the kind of disciplined, outcomes focused policy that Queenslanders voted for. It draws a clear contrast with the failures of the former government—failures in governance, failures in service delivery and failure to listen to the people on the ground. The Crisafulli LNP government said we would restore integrity, strengthen local voices and take action on crime. This bill honours all three.

Before I commend the bill to the House, I want to draw attention to what I thought were very unfortunate remarks made by the member for Lytton. The members elected to this place have been elected to represent the views of their communities, to enliven their aspirations and to speak up for them. It should not matter whether we have been in this House for a day or 20 years, we are here because of the mandate and the trust of our communities. For the member for Lytton to dismiss the voices of newly elected MPs dismisses the concerns of those communities including, might I say, the electorates of Sandgate, South Brisbane and Inala. I found the remarks very unfortunate. It just goes to show that they do not care because they are only interested in their own voices. They are doing their market research in the mirror. We are doing it on the streets of Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.