




Speech By
Hermann Vorster

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

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

Second Reading

 **Mr VORSTER** (Burleigh—LNP) (6.05 pm): I certainly welcome the contribution by the member for Macalister. Her laser-like focus on tackling organised crime I welcome. I hope that it applies equally when this House considers matters to do with the CFMEU.

As a city councillor I stood and watched my community be pulled apart by the scourge of vaping. Students at the City of Gold Coast Junior Council approached me, the mayor and other councillors to talk about a problem that had arrived in their classrooms and within their recreational areas—at the beach and at their sporting clubs. Many of these students looked on helplessly as their classmates became addicted to a substance that was enjoyable in their eyes but ultimately destructive to their health. These students were absolutely distraught. Through the mechanism of the junior council they ventilated those issues with us.

We made a commitment to advocate for change on behalf of young people across the Gold Coast. This took place in 2021. I took responsibility for championing the cause of those young people, even writing to the Lung Foundation Australia, which is headquartered in Brisbane, and later in support of the Gold Coast mayor when we wrote to then health minister Yvette D'Ath on 12 January 2022, essentially pleading on behalf of young people on the Gold Coast for the former Labor government to do something in this space and not just drive an education program but deliver an urgent public health response to this scourge.

Of course, very little was achieved by the former Labor government in this space. We know that little was achieved because the rates of youth vaping tripled to 2023. I am very pleased that we now have a government that is prepared to not only drive a change in culture and attitude through education but also deliver a proper public health response to a scourge gripping our young people. We are doing that with a series of amendments to legislation that will provide authorised officers the ability to begin dismantling the trade of illegal tobacco and vaping products, not just with slaps on the wrist and not just with temporary closures but with decisive action to shut down the shopfronts of criminal enterprise.

Many people have talked about our targeted approach to landlords, and they have asked me, 'But, Hermann, why are you going after the landlords?' I explain to them we are not going after the landlords; we are giving them the capacity to remain landlords, not become crime lords. There are so many situations that I have heard of where landlords have found themselves complicit in the trade of illegal tobacco and vaping but unable to exit that industry because of contractual and leasing arrangements. This legislation will provide a powerful shield to those landlords to protect their private property rights to run these operators out of their private property and to ensure that there is a space made available for the next good small business—a small business that is there to generate revenue and create jobs and not sow misery into our community.

I say that our side of politics is delivering decisive action because we are. Already with the rules we have in place, we are issuing far more fines and closing more premises than the former government did. In fact, the former government issued \$200,000 worth of penalties over a 12-month period. That is the same amount of penalties that we are issuing every 30 hours. That is action, not words. I cannot help but feel that watching the former Labor government's approach to this issue was a bit like watching Cheech and Chong because there was a lot of smoke, a lot of haze, but ultimately a plot that went nowhere. I am so pleased that we now have a health minister working alongside his cabinet colleagues on good legislation that will empower those on the front line to shut down illegal trade and deliver better health outcomes by taking illegal products out of the hands of young people.

On the Gold Coast, we are already feeling the benefits of this government's approach. Between 1 November 2024 and 31 October 2025, we have removed 7.9 million illegal cigarettes from circulation, 523 kilograms of loose tobacco and, what I am most proud of, 62,000 vapes. That is a figure we can be proud of because we know how addictive these products can be. I wonder how many first-time users we have prevented by taking 62,000 vapes out of circulation—how many lives we have already changed, and I reflect on how many lives we will change when this legislation passes the House.

Another thing that we need to do, when responding to public health concerns, is to make sure we not only tackle the problem at our level of government but also hold others to account where they have a part to play. As our health minister reflected on today, the state government finds itself at the end of the conveyor belt. We must redouble our efforts to make sure that the Labor government in Canberra commits more resources to shutting down this trade at the border before these products find themselves through the supply chain in stores, in our retail fronts.

I will add that there is another level of government that should take some responsibility as well. I wrote to the CEO of Gold Coast City council, Mr Tim Baker, on 23 September 2025, calling on the council to reform or amend its advertising devices local law to prohibit the display of advertising material advertising illegal products. I find it incredible that the state would legislate to make something illegal but it would be lawful for a criminal enterprise to erect signage in our various retail shopfronts advertising illegal goods. That loophole must be closed. I am encouraged that the Gold Coast City council recently resolved to look into those amendments should the House pass this legislation.

In conclusion, I say that I have fought a year-long campaign against vaping on behalf of young people across the Gold Coast, but in particular the community I represent. I am so glad that we now have a government prepared to respond not just with words but with action, a government that is prepared to bring legislation before this House to continually refine our approach and back those on the coalface to shut down this trade. I am also pleased that, as a community, we are taking ownership of this issue. There are young people in my electorate calling out just how unhealthy vaping is to drive the cultural change that will mean in the long term we will defeat the scourge as we nearly did with smoking so many decades ago. I commend the bill to the House.