




Speech By
Hon. Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGEES

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

Second Reading

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (4.12 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Dismantling Illegal Trade) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This is a bill that, despite the attempted narrative from this LNP government, builds on Labor's strong record of action to discourage smoking habits and combat instances of illegal trade. Thanks to the reforms of former Labor governments, Queensland already has some of the strongest laws, highest fines and most extensive enforcement powers in the country.

The Labor opposition will not be opposing this bill because any measure to increase the health and safety of Queenslanders and reduce our children's exposure to dangerous vapes is a welcome one. It is why Labor led a parliamentary inquiry into vaping in 2023 and why we made it possible in 2022 for community reporting on potential illegal activities with regard to tobacco and vaping products. It is why we invested heavily in health education campaigns and measures to tackle vaping at large and in schools, and why we introduced a mandatory tobacco product licensing scheme to give government robust oversight as to where and by whom these products were sold. It is why we made Queensland one of the strictest places in the nation when it comes to illegal tobacco and the vaping trade. It is why we introduced nation-leading reforms in 2016 which significantly increased enforceable smoke-free areas, particularly around areas where children congregate, when I was chair of the health committee.

I have been proud to stand in this House repeatedly and speak in support of many of the reforms we have made to reduce the impacts of tobacco and other smoking products, both illegal and illicit, because this is an issue that is and will always be close to my heart. I watched my grandmother, who never smoked a day in her life, die a painful death due to exposure to passive smoking. I have spoken often about the death of both of my parents at too young an age from non-preventable forms of cancer. I will never know or understand why people would choose this as a potential way for them to lose their life and many of the health concerns that go with it, even though I am, of course, sympathetic and understand how strong addiction can be.

For all of the smoking and tobacco reforms that successive Labor state governments have delivered in this state, we all know that vigilance in regard to this issue is ever key and there will always be those who would seek to exploit any and every opportunity to benefit financially, regardless of whether it is at the expense of the wellbeing of others including children. The emergence of vapes is a clear example of this. After decades of success in reducing the smoking rate across this country we have seen the emergence of e-cigarettes, or vapes. Designed to appeal to young people particularly, using colourful packaging and flavourings, too often marketed as lollies but far from it, and containing nicotine is leading to a new generation of nicotine addicted young people. It has been nothing short of unconscionable.

It is an issue that I have discussed at length over recent years with the different young people who come through my Nudgee Youth Advisory Council. They have always been very frank about how it is marketed to them, the behaviour they have seen with some of their peers and the struggles that have come from the use of these e-cigarettes.

It was conversations like those, that were led by young people in my Nudgee electorate, that led former education minister Grace Grace and our Labor government to invest heavily in health education campaigns and measures to tackle vaping at large and in schools and why we introduced the mandatory tobacco product licensing scheme to give government robust oversight as to where and by whom these products are sold. Those reforms have made a difference. I know because the young people in our schools have told me it has made a difference and teachers and principals have told me that it has made a difference. The work is not done and ongoing reform is required to stay ahead of those who would seek to undo the decade of progress we have seen.

The opposition recognises that the expanded closure powers in this bill give Queensland Health and the courts additional tools to disrupt illegal operators. Increasing both short- and long-term closure periods and ensuring closure orders prevent businesses from continuing to trade under the guise of selling unrelated goods are sensible reforms that target those who knowingly circumvent the strong laws that our Labor government fought to deliver.

Importantly, the bill also addresses the behaviour of lessors who permit illegal activity to continue on their premises. Allowing leases to be terminated following a closure order and introducing penalties for landlords who knowingly or with reckless indifference enable unlawful supply will help close off pathways through which illegal operators so often re-establish themselves.

We also note the strengthened accountability provisions for corporate executive officers and the expansion of seizure, forfeiture and entry powers. These reforms, coupled with the ability for authorised officers to undertake controlled covert purchases, reflect the growing sophistication of the illicit tobacco trade. We welcome these changes and note the need for continued reform as illegal practices evolve. It is hoped that requiring wholesalers and retailers to retain proper records, updating licence application requirements and enabling the use of evidentiary aids will further support compliance and assist investigations.

None of these measures on their own are a silver bullet, but taken together, and on top of the years of investment and reform of former Labor governments, they support longstanding public health efforts to protect our young people and help restore a level playing field for law-abiding Queensland businesses. There will always be a need for continuous reform to protect the community. This was our approach when in government and it continues to be our approach now in opposition and, for the reasons cited earlier, the opposition will be supporting the bill.