



Speech By
Hon. Leeanne Enoch
MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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

Second Reading

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (7.32 pm): I rise to contribute to the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Dismantling Illegal Trade) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. As a child I was surrounded by smokers—back when smoking in the car, on public transport, at the shops or at the movies was the norm. My dad said he started smoking not long after he finished school when he was around 12 years old. My mum gave up smoking when I was a teenager. It took her a few goes, but she got there. Dad gave up the same day he was diagnosed with lung cancer two weeks before he was due to retire. It took him within 10 months.

Thankfully I have never been a smoker, but I know how hard it is to give it away once it becomes a habit and I know what it can do to people and their families. That is why I have always supported measures to strengthen our approaches to tackling tobacco use and why I stand with the opposition in supporting this bill.

This bill strengthens a range of measures under the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act including expanding short-term closure orders from 72 hours to three months; expanding the existing long-term closure power from six months to 12 months; preventing businesses from opening or selling any goods or services if subjected to a closure order so that 'closed' means closed; expanding seizure and forfeiture powers; and improving enforcement activities including controlled operations, to name a few. At its core, this bill aims to prevent the exposure, sale and use of illegal tobacco to improve public health and ultimately create safer communities. Beyond health, illegal tobacco undermines Queensland's economy and public safety. Its profitability can fuel organised crime, bringing unsafe and illegal activities into our communities and increasing exposure to vulnerable people.

Stopping the sale of illegal tobacco protects our families, supports public health and ensures that law-abiding, legitimate tobacconists and communities are not disadvantaged. In my own electorate of Algester, I have witnessed the impacts of crime associated with the sale of illegal tobacco and smoking products. This year in May a Browns Plains tobacconist was targeted and destroyed by arson. Two people were injured in the building at the time of the attack. It also had a devastating impact on the surrounding small businesses. Neighbouring hospitality and retail businesses suffered economic loss from the impact of the fire, including loss of stock and products, as well as the loss of employees who opted to secure alternative work. This same tobacconist was targeted again just three months later. Once more, innocent neighbouring businesses were affected. Some of those neighbouring small businesses reported that insurance companies were denying cover and rejecting claims.

To the north of my Algester electorate in Acacia Ridge, a tobacconist at the Elizabeth Street shopping complex was targeted last year—broken into using an angle grinder and a sledge hammer and then a gas bottle was used to accelerate the fire. The business was destroyed and neighbouring small businesses in the well-loved shopping complex were also damaged. Members of the Acacia Ridge

community reached out to my office voicing their fears that a tobacco trade turf war could break out in their community after police reported that they believed the attack could be linked to a larger conflict involving the sale of illicit tobacco.

Events like these rightfully lead to concerns that where there is the sale of illicit nicotine and other products there is the potential for the influence and presence of organised crime. Large profits associated with the sale of illicit nicotine and illicit tobacco, usually via cash-only transactions, have opened the door for organised crime. It is important to disrupt the sale of illicit nicotine products not only for Queenslanders' health but also for public safety. That is why the Labor opposition is pleased to see a continuum of work we commenced whilst in government to ensure that there are strong deterrents to the sale of illicit tobacco and smoking products.

Labor introduced closure orders to hold illegal tobacco and nicotine traders to account, and we understand that this has an impact on the lessor. That is why we support the bill to allow lessors to terminate a lease where an illegal tobacconist is subject to a closure order. The availability of illicit nicotine also unfairly impacts legitimate licensed tobacconists and their sales, which is why action on this illegal trade is so important. Labor's record on the sale of illicit tobacco and other products included a licensing scheme, strong penalties against the supply of the illicit products and other enforcement measures aimed to combat the illicit supply. These expanded measures will continue the important work the previous Labor government commenced to disrupt illegal activity.

Further, the bill provides enhancements to the strong foundation Labor set for Queensland's public health response to illicit tobacco and vaping, putting Queenslanders' health first and foremost. Labor's record on the prevention of illicit tobacco sales and vaping included important measures such as the Health and Environment Committee's inquiry and report *Vaping: an inquiry into reducing rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland*, of which all recommendations were supported and a significant body of work was commenced. Labor also introduced school-based programs and social media campaigns to target young people and provide education around the harms of vaping. These programs were targeted to young people as many vapes and e-cigarette products were marketed to attract that demographic—from the bright colours, fruity flavours and designs that are sleek and discreet, a subject which many in this House have already described.

To combat recreational vaping and further reduce illegal tobacco sales, Labor increased investment of \$22 million over five years to enhance enforcement including more authorised officers to monitor compliance and allow for increased enforcement activity. Labor also worked closely with the Commonwealth government to enforce the ban on certain recreational vapes. The Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Vaping) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024 created closure powers, strengthened regulations on advertising of tobacco and increased penalties for the commercial supply and possession of illicit tobacco.

Experts have raised the alarm that the sale of illicit tobacco and other products is undermining the significant progress that we have made in past years to reduce smoking rates, particularly amongst young people. While vaping is often marketed as a safer alternative, the reality is that it carries significant health risks. Many vape liquids contain nicotine, which is highly addictive and can harm brain development in young people. Even nicotine-free vapes can expose users to harmful chemicals that irritate the lungs, increase inflammation and may contribute to long-term respiratory problems that our hospitals and health systems simply cannot endure. The same can be said for e-cigarettes, which are often marketed as a cheaper alternative to tobacco but present similar health concerns and can contribute to the sale of illicit tobacco and products.

The Labor opposition welcomes the changes in the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Dismantling Illegal Trade) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 as it strengthens a range of measures under the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act, but it does beg the question why the LNP have refused to listen to the experts on all other health matters, cherrypicking advice to suit their political agenda. The bill before the House provides enhancements to the strong foundation Labor set for Queensland's public health response to illicit tobacco and vaping, putting Queenslanders' health first and foremost. That is why the opposition supports the measures introduced in this bill. That is why I personally support the measures in this bill.

My father, after smoking for almost 60 years, was diagnosed with lung cancer literally two weeks before he was due to retire. We lost him 10 months later. There were times when he apologised to all of the family for not giving up when Mum did when we were much younger. He had great regret about not having the power to overcome his smoking addiction. I do not want to see more Queenslanders potentially put in that position because they have been enticed into smoking or forming that addiction to nicotine. Suffering from lung cancer is a terrible way to end your life. For my father and our family it was a dreadful 10 months of great regret and terrible pain. I support this bill and I do commend it to the House. Along with the opposition, I support the intent of this bill.