




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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

Second Reading

 **Mr HUTTON** (Keppel—LNP) (6.26 pm): The health of our community is measured in the wellbeing of our children, and the health of our main street is measured in the success of our small businesses. I rise tonight to speak in strong support of this bill for the small businesses in my seat of Keppel and for young Queenslanders. Too many young Queenslanders are being exposed to rogue traders who are peddling dangerous tobacco and vapes to our kids and teenagers. Most disturbingly, they are seeking to exploit our teenagers.

They are selling these vapes alongside lollies. With their bright colours, cartoon graphics and candy flavours, they are designed to look and taste like lollies. These devices have hidden toxins. They are filled with some of the most toxic chemicals imaginable including antifreeze, paint solvents, heavy-duty cleaners and formaldehyde. This is not a harmless trend; this is a deliberate manipulation of our children for profit. We also know that the epidemic of vaping is hooking a new generation on nicotine. It is marketed as a safer alternative when the claim could not be further from the truth.

Across Queensland, small businesses do it tough. They do the right thing, they follow the rules, they pay their staff and they contribute to the fabric of our local communities. For far too long they have been forced to compete with illegal tobacco operators who trade in cash, who operate in the shadows and who profit from the addiction of Queenslanders. These rogue traders are not locals. They are not invested in our communities. They are, as the health minister said today, criminal enterprises that are masquerading as small businesses. They are hurting everyday Queensland mums and dads.

As an example I offer the small business TSG Tobacco Station in Yeppoon. Co-owner Debbie is a hardworking Keppel constituent who has worked all her life to raise the money so she and her husband could have their own successful business. They tested the market and decided that what was missing in the community was a legal tobacconist. They opened their first business 15 years ago. There was a need and there was a want, and seven years ago they opened a second tobacconist shop. However, because of the black market tobacco and the growth in the vape industry, their trade has diminished dramatically. Debbie and her husband have had to lay off the people who work for them because they simply do not earn enough each day selling the papers to go with the illegal tobacco that was bought elsewhere.

Recently, officers from the Central Queensland Public Health Unit, along with our men and women in blue, the Queensland Police Service, seized 224,900 cigarettes, 26.9 kilograms of loose tobacco, 6,609 vaping devices, 231 bongs, 1,074 bong components, 95 bottles of nitrate and a further 165 cannabis products. This was the stockpile of a criminal market operating in our community. I thought those figures were pretty high, but since coming to government across Central Queensland there have been more than 4,161,000 cigarettes, 615 kilograms of loose tobacco, 24,000 vapes and 65,000 nicotine pouches taken off the streets.



Mr HUTTON: This bill protects our community, attacking the very business model which makes illicit tobacco and vaping profitable. This bill introduces three-month administrative closures, with court ordered closures extended up to 12 months. Queensland Health officers will be empowered to undertake controlled purchase operations, including mystery-shopper style operations that deliver the direct evidence needed for prosecutions. Authorised officers will be able to seize legitimate products when they are found alongside illicit goods. If the front of the shop is being used to conceal a criminal backroom operation then the entire operation is compromised.

These reforms matter because behind every illegal vape and every illicit packet of tobacco is another Queensland youngster being targeted or, as I was speaking about earlier, a small business who is being undercut and a community health system that is left carrying the burden of the health concerns it causes. We cannot allow a new generation of Queenslanders to become hooked on nicotine before they even reach adulthood. Nor, if we are honest, should we allow our small businesses, the backbone of our community, to be pushed out by criminal enterprises, making our main streets abandoned. We cannot allow decades of hard work to be eroded. That is why I support this bill and I commend it to the House.