




Speech By
Hon. Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 27 June 2025

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Illicit Smoking Products

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (9.52 am): The Crisafulli government's battle against the criminal tobacco and vape trade has been given a big budget boost. In fact, it has been given a big blue budget boost as part of our record \$33.1 billion health investment.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: Do not worry, there is more to come. You will be singing the blues over there, that is for sure.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, if you could make your contribution through the chair it would greatly assist me.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Under Labor, hundreds of illicit tobacco and vape stores popped up across the state. Organised crime syndicates were able to thrive, profiting from the sale of addictive and dangerous products to our kids. This resulted in a tripling in the rate of high schoolers who vape—an appalling outcome.

Our budget is the latest escalation in the Crisafulli government's nation-leading war against the dangerous black market. We are investing more than \$12 million to recruit an extra 41 new enforcement officers. These new recruits and a central compliance team will be spread over our 11 public health units, increasing the pace and impacts of action against illegal operators. Every public health unit across Queensland will have additional boots on the ground, boosting total enforcement capacity by 25 per cent across the state. This means more fines, more raids and more dangerous and addictive products taken off the streets and out of the hands of our kids and teenagers. These extra boots on the ground are in addition to our fines, which are the highest in the nation; our raids and seizures, which have been the largest in the nation; and our proposed new laws, which will be the toughest in the nation. We are doing more and we are doing it bigger and better than it was ever done under Labor.

This additional investment has been welcomed by public health advocates. This is what the Cancer Council of Queensland said—

This investment helps protect decades of hard-won progress in tobacco control and helps ensure cigarettes and vapes are kept out of the hands of our kids.

The Heart Foundation said—

We welcome this commitment because tobacco smoking is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in Australia, including heart disease. Recent evidence shows that vaping now also increases the risk of heart disease.

Lung Foundation Australia said—

We are thrilled at the significant boost in funding for enforcement of the state's tobacco and vaping laws ... we commend these efforts as protecting lung health of all Queenslanders, especially children, is essential.

I would like to thank Cancer Council Queensland, the Heart Foundation and the Lung Foundation for their support of our budget and for their continued and determined advocacy for better health outcomes for all Queenslanders.

The Crisafulli government's zero-tolerance approach towards the tobacco and vape black market has been nation leading, and the budget's investment continues this. To all illegal operators out there who think they can continue getting kids hooked on these harmful products, I say to you: we have more recruits on their way and they have you in their sights.