

## VAPING

### *Grievance*

**MS C.M. ROWE (Belmont)** [10.04 am]: My grievance today is to the Minister for Health. I thank the minister for taking this grievance. My grievance is about vaping. Vaping has received an escalating amount of attention in recent years due to the wide-scale use in our communities, particularly by our youth. It is an activity in which a liquid is heated by an e-cigarette to create aerosols that are then inhaled by the user. Vaping is as widespread as it is addictive due to the option of different flavours of chemicals and sometimes the inclusion of nicotine.

Vaping is often positioned as a healthier alternative to smoking. However, according to the Department of Health's website, there are numerous negative and serious health impacts associated with vaping. Principally, it is most damaging to the lungs. A 2020 study of 21 000 people compared those who had never partaken in vaping with those who had. It found that those people who use e-cigarettes were 30 per cent more likely to develop asthma and 60 per cent more likely to acquire chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Another study found that it takes only five minutes of vaping to alter the way our lungs operate by increasing inflammation in the airways. Vapes containing nicotine have also been shown to cause long-lasting impairment of the brain and physical activity and exacerbate the symptoms of depression and anxiety. Furthermore, the harmful substances that users can be exposed to from vaping can include cancer-causing chemicals; flavouring chemicals such as diacetyl, which is a chemical that has been linked to serious lung disease; and the same damaging chemicals that are also found in insect repellents and cleaning products. These toxins are being absorbed directly into the lungs.

The World Health Organization has deemed e-cigarettes as harmful to both users and those who are exposed to the aerosols second-hand. It also highlights that not all e-cigarettes that claim to be nicotine-free are actually free from nicotine. It acknowledges that nicotine can potentially have detrimental impacts on the brain development of children and adolescents.

I acknowledge the work that the minister has already advanced to stamp out vaping in our communities and the collaborative approach that the minister has engaged in with the former Minister for Education and Training to tackle this issue head on, particularly in our schools. In light of the mounting evidence of the harmful effect of vaping and the rate at which especially younger Australians are engaging in vaping, it is clear that strong action is required to educate the community about the harm these products can cause.

I thank the minister once again for taking my grievance and I ask the minister to please highlight the steps that the McGowan government is undertaking to restrict the access and use of e-cigarette products in WA.

**MS A. SANDERSON (Morley — Minister for Health)** [10.07 am]: I thank the member for Belmont for her grievance today on vaping and e-cigarette regulation, and I thank her for her ongoing advocacy on behalf of her community. I know that many members in this place receive a lot of concerned representations from parents in particular about the proliferation of vape stores and the easy access to vaping for our children.

Let us be absolutely clear: vaping is harmful to health and it is illegal in Western Australia without a prescription. It contains harmful chemicals that are found in cleaning products, nail polish remover, weedkiller and bug spray, as well as nicotine and other carcinogenic chemicals. Even vapes that claim to contain no nicotine often contain 20 times the amount of nicotine as a cigarette. This is nasty stuff. We are at risk of creating a whole generation of addicts. We have done really well in combating smoking—we have done a great job in combating smoking, in fact, through public health campaigns and government policies—but now vaping has emerged as the greatest risk for this generation.

I acknowledge the work that the former Minister for Education and Training and the current Minister for Education are doing around anti-vaping school toolkits for students. Vaping has become the biggest behavioural management issue in schools. I have a teenage daughter. Many of her friends vape and we see regular suspensions for vaping.

The availability has proliferated, but we have to be clear that Western Australia has some of the strongest regulations in the country. Vapes can be obtained only from a registered pharmacy by the holder of a vape prescription. Technically, it should be very hard for people to purchase a vape or vape liquids without a prescription, but I acknowledge that that is not the case. Adults and children are getting hold of vapes very easily. We know that in some instances kids are buying vapes from retailers and shopfronts, but in most instances they are buying them online and from their friends at school, or from so-and-so with a backpack at number X bus stop on Beaufort Street at a certain time. It is actually very, very difficult to regulate and manage, but we are enforcing these rules in Western Australia and I congratulate WA Health for its increased statewide monitoring and compliance activities to enforce restrictions on the sale of e-cigarettes. Since June last year it has seized 26 000 disposable vapes and is continuing to increase compliance activity. It will consider prosecutions in the future.

WA is only one jurisdiction. Every jurisdiction is struggling with this issue in schools and in communities. The most meaningful impact, really, is going to be at the commonwealth government level. It has control over the borders and can manage regulations in a consistent way. Every state and territory health minister is of the same view: that

the commonwealth government needed to step in. We saw very strong advocacy from national health ministers, and I am very, very pleased to see the commonwealth government stepping up. The federal Labor government has a strong record on clamping down on nicotine and limiting its availability. It introduced plain packaging legislation under former federal Labor Minister for Health Nicola Roxon. I am delighted to see Minister Butler taking the same strong stance on vaping.

A recent commonwealth government funding announcement will complement all the compliance activities being undertaken by the states. There is \$63 million for a public health information campaign; the states will support this with future funding. There is \$30 million to support nicotine cessation programs. We now have a whole range of kids who need help with managing their nicotine addiction. I hear stories of parents having to take time off school to spend a couple of weeks at home with their child to help wean them off nicotine. We need to help them with that. There is also \$141 million to tackle Indigenous smoking and vaping.

The government will introduce legislation and regulations to stop the importation of non-prescription vapes, commercial and individual. Once this legislation is passed, people will no longer be able to buy vapes online, either as an individual or as a commercial operator. The legislation will also increase the minimum quality standards, so there will be no flavours. There will be plain packaging—make it look brown; make it look like poo, for all I care. It will look really unappealing. It will be brown and nicotine-flavoured. There will be no more unicorns or tutti-frutti. It is what it is: nasty, brown, toxic liquid. It will basically be pharmaceutical-like packaging. The legislation will also reduce the allowed nicotine concentrations and volumes and, importantly, ban all single-use vapes. That will immediately lift the price point and make it really difficult for kids to afford them. It will also address the appalling waste implications, with bins overflowing with plastic vapes and batteries. They are very, very difficult—almost impossible—to recycle.

We will work hand in hand with the commonwealth government by continuing enforcement in Western Australia. We will support the introduction of legislation and any necessary regulations in Western Australia to complement the commonwealth legislation, and ensure that Western Australia is in lock step with the commonwealth government in its tough stance on vapes.