**Ministerial Statement Response – Vaping Products**

* Madam Speaker, I would like to thank Minister Stephen-Smith for the significant work that is being done on vaping in our community.
* Before I brought my motion to the Assembly last year, I was being approached by an increasing number of parents and concerned members of our community who had significant and understandable concerns about vaping in our community and in our schools.
* As a mother of three myself, I was just as concerned by how easy it seemed to be for our youth to get a hold on a product, they were supposed to be unable to access till the age of 18.
* Parents felt as if the issue was lurking under the surface, and that we were not talking about it enough.
* That is the primary reason I moved the motion. We cannot let issues involving addiction and health harm skate by when it comes to anyone – let alone our children.
* I am so pleased that we have been able to talk about this issue far more in this place.
* We know that when used for reasons other than as a diversion from smoking tobacco, vaping can be harmful and provides no health benefits – the National Health and Medical Research Council highlighted this earlier in the year.
* With evidence from a review undertaken by the ANU in April showing that young non-smokers who vape are THREE TIMES more likely to take up traditional smoking, we need to make sure that this issue is being taken very seriously.
* As the Health Minister has outlined, it is very worrying that the early findings of Health Directorate commissioned research with 14-to-24-year-olds makes it clear that vaping is perceived as common place in schools, local nightclubs, and locations such as Civic.
* With research indicating that sourcing vapes is readily available and easy to attain through social media, these issues are compounding and of great concern.
* I was incredibly please last year in November when a joint operation between ACT Health and the TGA seized products from a number of businesses in the ACT.
* It is disturbing to find that two out of every three of the products seized had prohibited and dangerous ingredients.
* The *Health Legislation Amendment Act 2022* that we passed last week is an important step forward in providing a range of legal safeguards to protect our young and prevent them from accessing e-cigarettes from ACT retailers.
* By facilitating joint enforcement operations between the ACT and the TGA and ensuring that compliance testing for underage sales can include e-cigarette products, the Government is enacting important change.
* We need to do everything we can to fight the rise of this addiction and habit in our community.
* It is great to see that this problem isn’t being placed in the too hard basket because stand-alone legislative change will have little impact.
* I’m sure parents will be as glad to hear as I am that ACT Health and the Education Directorate are working together to strengthen prevention strategies.
* The development of educational materials and the inclusion of e-cigarettes is an incredibly important piece of work – we teach them the risks of smoking, of unsafe sex, of drugs, of dangerous driving, and now we will also include the dangers of e-cigarettes.
* I cannot stress enough how significant and important this is, and I would like to thank Minister Berry for working on this issue.
* Additionally, to have the Government developing a communication strategy for a public health-campaign is amazing.
* I am incredibly thankful to Minister Stephen-Smith. I am proud to be part of a Government that is making the important moves to educate our community and doing the hard yards.
* Parents in Canberra can be sure that they’re in safe hands, that the Government is taking this issue more seriously than ever, and that I will continue to advocate on their behalf for work in this space.