

MEDIA RELEASE

ACOSH backs tough new WA laws targeting illicit tobacco and vapes

The Australian Council on Smoking and Health (ACOSH) has welcomed the Cook Government's introduction of tough new tobacco and vape laws to Parliament this week, saying the reforms are a major step toward protecting public health and stopping the illicit trade from undermining decades of progress in reducing smoking.

Every day, 66 Australians die from tobacco use: a reminder that tobacco remains one of the country's leading preventable causes of death.

ACOSH CEO Laura Hunter said tackling illicit tobacco and vapes must be treated as a public health priority, not a political issue — and urged all MPs to support the reforms.

"This should be bipartisan," Ms Hunter said. "We've met with MPs from across the Parliament who understand this is a serious issue in their communities, and who know their constituents want action to stop illicit tobacco and vapes.

"If we're serious about protecting health and keeping illegal tobacco and vapes out of our communities, then Parliament should get behind the first tranche of reforms and pass them without delay."

Ms Hunter said the illicit tobacco and vape trade is not a victimless issue.

"This is first and foremost a health issue," Ms Hunter said. "Tobacco kills - and the illicit trade is making it easier for young people to access cheap, unregulated products, while undermining decades of progress in WA."

The reforms include 90-day closure orders and penalties of up to \$4.2 million for individuals, \$21 million for companies, and 15 years' jail.

Ms Hunter said ACOSH has been calling for reforms like these for some time, and welcomed the combination of tougher penalties and closure powers.

"For too long, WA hasn't had the enforcement tools needed to properly disrupt this trade," she said. "Tackling both the penalties and the ability to shut down retailers is a smart move: it targets the profits, unlawful retailers, and the organised crime behind it."

ACOSH said once passed, the laws must be backed by visible enforcement action, including the use of closure orders against retailers selling illicit tobacco and vapes.

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