

EMARGOED 00:01 MONDAY 20 APRIL**“It’s time to step up”: Cancer Council urges all levels of government to get tougher on illicit tobacco**

New Illicit Tobacco Ladder shows which states are falling behind

Today, the Australian Council on Smoking and Health (ACOSH) has released a new Illicit Tobacco Ladder board, revealing how each state and territory government compares in their progress in tackling illicit tobacco in Australia.

Cancer Council welcomes these insights which reveal Queensland and South Australia as front-runners in strong commitment to enforcement and reforms.

Other states are only just scratching the surface of enforcement action against this illicit trade, according to the ACOSH Illicit Tobacco Ladder.

Cancer Council believes a coordinated effort of vigorous and proactive compliance and enforcement is necessary between Federal, State and Territory governments to protect our communities from the oversupply of tobacco retailers selling cheap, illegal products.

This nationwide issue sees around 40,000 stores selling tobacco in a population where fewer than 10% of Australians smoke. Stronger, long-term commitment and resourcing is necessary to empower regulators to work across jurisdictions to put the health of Australians first. For tougher measures to be effective all actors in the illicit tobacco trade must face significant consequences.

Chair of Cancer Council’s National Tobacco Issues Committee, Alecia Brooks said, “Australians want to see tighter controls on the illicit tobacco trade and effective enforcement being implemented across all states and territories. Queensland’s approach demonstrates that strong investment in enforcement can be an effective strategy to deal with illicit tobacco. Now is not the time to be considering cost-reduction measures that would make tobacco cheaper or easier to access, as this only undermines enforcement and puts communities at risk.

“All levels of government need to work together to make tobacco licensing stricter and make it harder for suppliers to exploit communities. Anyone thinking about selling illicit tobacco should know that it is likely they will be caught and face extremely serious consequences – not only large fines, loss of licences to operate, and loss of access to premises but also criminal charges.”

Cancer Council works to help eliminate nicotine addiction for the good of all Australians and welcomes the push to accelerate the decline in smoking rates further, with the National Tobacco Strategy helping to address illicit trade in tobacco, a major challenge for public health worldwide.

“It’s time for governments to step up—we need fast, firm and foolproof enforcement now. The health of Australians needs to come first, with smoking known to cause at least 16 types of cancer, including cancer of the lungs, mouth, throat, stomach, liver, pancreas, bowel, kidneys and bladder,” added **Jacinta Reddan, CEO of Cancer Council Australia**.

“We know that Australians who smoke are more likely to live in areas of the most socioeconomic disadvantage, or in rural and remote areas, so it is vital that enforcement against illicit tobacco outlets targeting these Australians are effective.

“Two out of three people who continue to smoke will die as a result of addiction to these products. The real crisis is that if we continue to allow illicit tobacco to exploit our communities, more of these deaths will happen.”

“Driving down demand for tobacco by supporting more Australians to quit or not start smoking in the first place is our priority,” confirmed Rachael Andersen, Director of Quit.

“We urge government at all levels to take action to curtail the illicit tobacco trade. When you consider that 66 Australian families still lose a loved one to smoking related illness every day, we still have much work to do together to stop the harm caused by the tobacco industry,” Ms Andersen concluded.

For support to quit smoking or vaping, visit www.quit.org.au or call Quitline 13 7848.

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*Previous ACOSH research: [Australians agree there are too many shops selling tobacco in Australia — and they want governments to lift the bar - Australian Council on Smoking & Health](#)

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About Cancer Council Australia

Cancer Council Australia is Australia's leading cancer charity, working to reduce the impact of cancer for all Australians. Cancer Council Australia works with its members, the eight state and territory Cancer Councils to:

- Undertake and fund cancer research
- Prevent and control cancer
- Provide information and support for people affected by cancer
- Shape and influence policy and practice

Find out more at cancer.org.au, or visit our [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#).