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Queensland's illicit tobacco crackdown shows stronger enforcement works. Now all states must act

Cancer Council Australia says new data from Queensland provides encouraging evidence that stronger enforcement can disrupt the illicit tobacco market and demonstrates why every Australian jurisdiction should strengthen its response to illegal supply of tobacco and vaping products.

The data, released by the Australian Government, shows legal tobacco sales in major retailers in Queensland increased 55% in the first month following the introduction of stronger enforcement measures and major compliance operations.

The crackdown is projected to return \$100 million (\$89 million in additional excise revenue and \$11 million GST revenue) over two years.

Additionally, enforcement appears to be driving more of those Queenslanders who smoke to seek support to quit, with Quitline calls more than doubling following major enforcement activity.

Cancer Council Australia welcomes the Commonwealth Government's continued investment in combatting illicit tobacco and said Queensland's experience highlights the importance of coordinated action between federal, state and territory governments. The Commonwealth is providing additional funding to support Queensland's enforcement efforts, bringing total Commonwealth investment in the state to more than \$18 million.

While Queensland has recorded substantial changes following strengthened enforcement activity, investment in enforcement has not been consistent across the country. While authorities in NSW have been active in recent months, legislation in the ACT and NT does not include closure powers; no closures have yet been reported in Tasmania; and such powers were only just introduced last month in Victoria. These results from Queensland suggest that all jurisdictions need to step up enforcement efforts and to examine the Queensland model of coordinated local blitzes.

Quotes attributable to Cancer Council Australia CEO Jacinta Reddan:

"For years, Cancer Council Australia has called for stronger action against the illicit tobacco market because it undermines public health, fuels organised crime and makes it easier for people to continue smoking.

"The results emerging from Queensland show strong enforcement does reduce the availability of illicit tobacco and helps drive people back to the legal market.

"Importantly, the increase in Quitline activity suggests some people who smoke are also taking the opportunity to seek support to quit altogether.

"It shows what we know – that price is major motivator to support people to quit. This is why tobacco excise is recognised globally as a key part of reducing the prevalence of smoking.

"Together with plain packaging, advertising bans and support for people to quit, this has resulted in Australia recording a steady decline in smoking for the past two decades. Australia's daily smoking rate has more than halved since 2001, reflecting the success of tobacco control measures.

"We encourage every state and territory government to follow suit. Vigorous enforcement sustained over the long haul is the only way we're going to stamp out the illicit market."

-ENDS-

Contact details

For all media enquiries and interview opportunities, please contact:

Connor Parissis, connor.parissis@cancer.org.au, 0424 739 471

Cancer Council Australia, media@cancer.org.au

02 8256 4109 (redirects to mobile outside of business hours)

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

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