16 October 2026

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ATTN: Illegal tobacco crisis in Australia
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Subject: Submission to *Illegal tobacco crisis in Australia*

Healthway is pleased to provide our submission to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee inquiry into the Illegal tobacco crisis in Australia.

We are the only State Government agency solely dedicated to health promotion and preventative health efforts in Western Australia. Our interest in this inquiry focuses on the prevention of harm from the use of tobacco products, in line with our Strategic Plan 2024-2029*: Creating a heathier Western Australia together.*

All tobacco products—whether sold legally or on the illicit market—are inherently harmful. Tobacco products kill 66 people in Australia every day.[2] In light of community and public health evidence, we strongly support urgent and coordinated regulatory reform to address the exposure to, and sale of, illicit tobacco. Cheap tobacco threatens to undermine tobacco control and hook a new generation of users.

In addition to this submission and recommendations, Healthway offers our continuing support to maximise opportunities for preventing harm caused by tobacco and nicotine products to improve the health and wellbeing of all Australians, and particularly the Western Australian community.

Should you wish to discuss any aspect of our submission further, please do not hesitate to contact me on 08 9488 6839 or email carina.tan-vanbaren@healthway.wa.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

Carina Tan-Van Baren
Executive Director, Healthway

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Commonwealth ‘Illegal tobacco crisis in Australia’ Inquiry, 2026

Submission



Creating a healthier WA together

Submission: Illegal tobacco crisis in Australia inquiry 2026

Summary of recommendations

Healthway's submission focuses on reducing overall exposure to tobacco – a product that, when used as intended, kills at least half of its long-term users[3,4], representing more than 24,000 people per year.[2] Tobacco causes a major health and economic burden on society[5] — and the community wants action.[6-8]

We provide three major recommendations and seven minor recommendations.

Major recommendations

1. Reject the commercially-driven influence, funding and data of the **tobacco industry** in policy and enforcement discussions to **safeguard the integrity of this inquiry**.
2. Maintain the federal **tobacco excise tax**.
3. Influence state and territory governments to:
    a. Introduce **licensing reforms**, including enhancing governance and probity requirements;
    b. Provide enforcement agencies with the **powers to close offending premises** and give landlords the power to expel illicit tobacco retailers; and
    c. Set and enforce **significant financial penalties and penal provisions** for illicit trade of tobacco products.

Minor recommendations

4. Expand the focus from tobacco to include other **nicotine products** sold illegally (for example, vapes and nicotine pouches).
5. Invest in a national tobacco and nicotine **public education campaign to build public policy support** for legislation to address illicit tobacco.
6. Strengthen cross-agency collaboration to target, disrupt and **dismantle serious crime actors**.
7. Establish a **national hotline** for the community to report outlets suspected of selling illicit tobacco.
8. Introduce a **national system for real-time verification** of excise or customs duty paid on tobacco and nicotine products
9. Expand existing **funding commitments** for enforcement and detection equipment to make the illegal tobacco trade more risky and less profitable for criminals.
10. Fund a **free course of Nicotine Replacement Therapy and counselling** for all smokers who call the Quitline.

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Submission: Illegal tobacco crisis in Australia inquiry 2026

About Healthway

Healthway is the only State Government agency solely dedicated to health promotion and preventative health efforts in Western Australia (WA). Our interest in this review focuses on prevention of harm from tobacco products, in line with our Strategic Plan 2024-2029*: Creating a heathier Western Australia together.*

Healthway is an independent statutory body with our own Act,[9] Board[10] and government funding.[10] Healthway has never accepted funding support in any capacity from the tobacco or vaping industry, or any third-party allies.

Healthway partners with arts, sports, motor racing, community and research organisations, as well as schools, to fund community programs and high-quality health promotion research to support good health and wellbeing in the community. It is a requirement of Healthway funding that organisations do not receive financial or other support from the tobacco industry or promote tobacco-related products or brands, and that they maintain smoke-free indoor and outdoor areas.[11]

Conflicts of interest declaration

Healthway declares no conflicts of interest in relation to this submission.

General position on the Terms of Reference

While the Terms of Reference are focused on a 'crisis of illegal tobacco', we believe the under-regulation of tobacco and nicotine products more broadly should be considered to provide valuable context for this 'crisis' and as part of a comprehensive analysis of the harm caused by all forms of tobacco products, whether legal or illegal. This includes tobacco and other nicotine product consumption which threatens to undermine Australia's 2021 commitment to eliminate tobacco use by 2030.[12, 13]

Definitions

In addressing the subject of this inquiry, the definition of illicit tobacco we adopt is "any practice related to distributing, selling, or buying tobacco products that is prohibited by law, including tax evasion, counterfeiting, disguising the origin of products, and smuggling."[14] Illicit trade includes the sale by criminals not registered with relevant government agencies, as well as those who are registered, but continue to sell both illicit and licit tobacco.[14] Illicit tobacco products includes those that are non-compliant with federal packaging, product, customs or excise requirements.

We define the tobacco and nicotine industry as those companies or individuals funded by the proceeds of tobacco and nicotine products, including producers (manufacturers and growers), distributors, lobbyists and consultants.[15]

Further definitions are available in the Healthway Glossary.

Submission: Illegal tobacco crisis in Australia inquiry 2026

Introduction

Tobacco products kill more than half of the people who use them as intended.[4] With 66 Australians dying every day from tobacco use, tobacco products will have killed around four people in Australia in the time it takes to read this submission.[2] All tobacco products, legal and illicit, cause harm.

Illicit tobacco has been an issue in Australia for at least 25 years — but the problem has grown in recent years.[16, 17] The latest Australian government data estimates that around 50-60% of all tobacco products are illicit.[17] The emergence of new tobacco and nicotine products compounds the problem, for example, 96% of vapes are sold illegally.[17] Recent media attention has focused on the extent of illicit tobacco sales, criminal involvement and gang activity[18, 19], and the fall in legal sales[20] and associated government revenue.[21-23] This perhaps explains recent evidence of community concern, which found that most Australians believe the government is not doing enough to stop illicit tobacco. For example, in a recent national survey, two-thirds of Australians (64%) felt that there are too many shops selling tobacco.[6, 7]

Currently, around 9% of people in Australia smoke daily.[1] However, this does not accurately reflect the higher rates of smoking experienced by some population groups such as First Nations people, people in regional areas and those living with a mental illness[1]. While some jurisdictions report much lower rates of smoking (such as the Australian Capital Territory which has half the rate of smoking compared to the rest of the country)[24], some regional and remote areas experience smoking rates as high as one in four people.[25] Despite this, evidence shows that three in four Australians who smoke want to quit.[26, 27]

The societal harm of smoking is real. Mainly driven by lost productivity, the total social costs of cigarette use is $137 billion annually,[5] vastly exceeding revenue from taxes on cigarettes ($7.8 billion in 2024-25).[28] At its current budget, Healthway could be funded for 280 years[10] with what it costs for one year of hospital and healthcare for smokers in Australia ($7 billion).[5]

Smoking statistics show that core tobacco control measures - including taxation, age restrictions, smoke-free laws and advertising bans - are working (see Figure 1).[1, 29] Australian smoking rates have been trending downwards for decades,[30, 31] despite the persistent supply of illicit tobacco.[16] These positive downward trends have prevented thousands of hospitalisations and deaths. Positive trends have been seen in smoking prevalence,[1] average consumption,[30] heavy consumption,[30] youth uptake,[29] quit attempts,[26] reduced vape curiosity,[32] cigarettes smoked per day,[30] and disease and death attributed to smoking.[33]

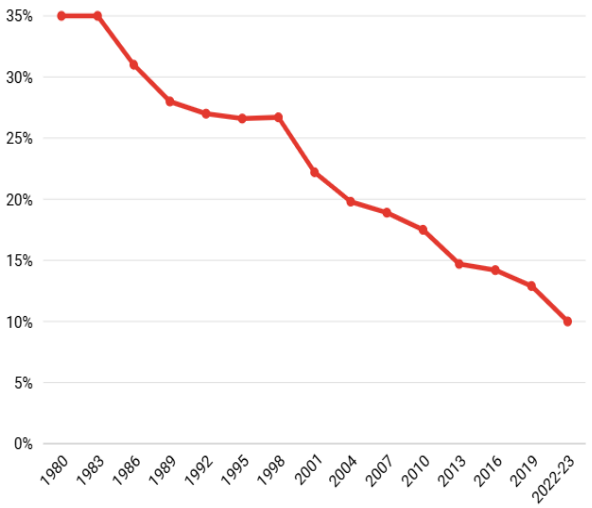


Figure 1: Prevalence of Australians aged 18+ who regularly smoke from 1980 to 2022-2023. Figure reproduced from Fig.1.3.1 in Tobacco in Australia, Facts & Issues. See original source for footnotes.[1]

For Australia to reach its endgame target of smoking rates of 5% (or less)[34] by 2030, stronger policies are required.[12] Many of these, including a 'tobacco free generation' approach, were recently examined by the Australian government in relation to Australia's strategy and current approach to the tobacco endgame.[12] For example, the UK has introduced a bill which, if passed, will prohibit anyone born on or after 1 January, 2009 from purchasing tobacco products – effective from 2027.[35, 36] Complementing its recent bill to protect future generations from the harms of smoking[35], the UK has relied on years of strong enforcement efforts across the supply chain. By taking this action, the UK Border Force has reduced sales of illicit tobacco, reducing lost tax revenue from cigarettes by a third through tough penalties, strong enforcement and capacity to enforce laws.[37]

Reducing illicit tobacco is a priority, as cheap supply threatens to hook a new generation of users. Illicit tobacco is sold cheaply (due to no tax) and is widely available (close proximity due to high number of outlets),[38] therefore it threatens to reduce quitting attempts and consumption of fewer cigarettes.[17, 39, 40] Illicit tobacco costs around $15 per 20-stick packet and is widely available across Australian brick-and-mortar stores, as well as online.[41] Illicit tobacco is around half the price of a 12-week prescription of Nicotine Replacement Therapy to support quitting,[42] or around one-third the price of a packet of legally sold cigarettes.[43]

As well as the wide availability of untaxed cigarettes, new products such as vapes and nicotine pouches are also being sold illegally.[41, 44] While vapes can be purchased legally through pharmacies, nicotine pouches and other novel nicotine products are illegal. Nicotine addiction is the gateway to smoking, with young people who vape up to five times more likely to take up cigarette smoking, often in combination with continued use of vapes, reversing the substantial and hard-won progress made on tobacco control.[45]

There is a clear need to reduce the total exposure to tobacco, not just illicit tobacco. This can be achieved by reducing total availability of tobacco, reducing tobacco retail density and protecting public health policy from commercial influence.

The following section outlines our recommendations to strengthen the response to the illicit tobacco crisis. We are aware of no nation that has eliminated illicit tobacco entirely. Rather, realistic objectives seek to significantly reduce illicit tobacco markets. While all recommendations are important as part of a comprehensive approach, to assist with prioritisation, they have been identified as major or minor.

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Australia is committed to the tobacco ‘endgame’ - reducing smoking rates to less than 5% by 2030. Now we need the laws and policies to match.

Criminals have made sure cheap illicit tobacco is everywhere - undermining decades of progress in tobacco control.

Tobacco kills 66 people per day in Australia

It’s easier to buy tobacco than an apple. Enhancing tobacco licensing requirements would reduce smoking.

Illicit tobacco will always be cheaper if it is available. Cutting tobacco tax to reduce illicit trade doesn’t work - other countries have tried. Many countries with cheaper tobacco than Australia have large illicit markets. Reducing taxes plays into the hands of criminals AND the tobacco industry.

Major recommendations

Recommendation 1:

Reject the commercially-driven influence, funding and data of the tobacco industry in policy and enforcement discussions to safeguard the integrity of this inquiry.

The tobacco industry and its allies have a long history of seeking to influence public health policy, including using the threat of illicit trade in cigarettes to undermine tobacco control efforts.[46, 47] Tobacco companies greatly exaggerate the scale of the illicit trade and attribute blame to control policies.[48] For example, 31 of 35 industry estimates of illicit tobacco trade have been higher than independent estimates from researchers with no tobacco industry ties.[49]

There has been a long global campaign by the tobacco industry to lobby governments to reduce tax, because cheaper retail prices are known to increase demand.[50] The Australian Association of Convenience Stores (AACS), which has a long history of tobacco industry support,[51] is publicly calling for a lowering of the tobacco tax under the guise of concern about community safety and limiting the anti-social impacts of illicit tobacco. The tobacco industry has actively engaged in supplying cigarettes to the illegal trade while seeking to alarm governments about illicit trade and lobbying for reduced excise.[46] A recent global report noted that industry continues to supply cigarettes at prices below any minimum number that could be achieved within a legal, tax-paying realm.[47]

The long-term, cross-industry strategies employed by the tobacco industry and its allies often call for false solutions that are ineffective and must be countered.[38, 52] To ensure the integrity of this inquiry, industry transparency is essential. Preventing industry interference, such as through front groups or retail alliances will ensure that tobacco control policies are not undermined by organisations with direct conflicts of interest.

The World Health Organization's *Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Article 5.3* (Article 5.3),[53], of which Australia is a party, states that "in setting and implementing their public health policies with respect to tobacco control, Parties shall act to protect these policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry in accordance with national law."[53] Adherence to this requirement means governments should fully understand tobacco industry practices[53], which will assist in countering industry pressures and ensure effective control policies are implemented.

The Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing's *Guidance for Public Officials on Interacting with the Tobacco Industry*[54] can also support in protecting tobacco control policy from industry interference. In line with this guidance, we recommend the inquiry adopts the best-practice application of a conflict of interest framework that is fully aligned with Article 5.3 guidelines, including[53, 55, 56]:

- **Exclusion of industry-funded actors** (directly or indirectly funded through third parties/allies) from participating in or influencing public health policy processes, including parliamentary inquiries and advisory roles.

- **Requirements for all individuals or organisations making a submission or presenting to this inquiry to complete a comprehensive disclosure statement, including mandatory disclosure of all funding sources** (both direct and indirect) relating to tobacco, vaping or nicotine companies or its affiliates. This should include declaration of any direct or indirect industry support, partnership or consultancy received within the past five years (including support for services such as lobbying, advertising, surveys, submission writing, research and membership fees).
- **Establishing and publishing a real-time public register** of submissions and corresponding conflicts of interest, to ensure public transparency and accountability.
- **Requirements for politicians who receive political donations** from or have met with representatives of the tobacco industry to declare this as a conflict of interest in any associated reports or hearings to this inquiry. For example, two National Party MPs have called for tobacco tax to be reduced in Australia in response to the growth of illicit tobacco.[57, 58] We understand, the National Party is the only major party that still accepts political donations from the tobacco industry,[59] including recent financial support from British American Tobacco and Philip Morris Limited.[58, 60]

In rejecting the influence of the tobacco industry and its allies, the inquiry should also ensure it consults thoroughly with independent tobacco and nicotine control experts that declare no conflicts of interest, for example, from both university and non-government sectors.

Box 1 is an extract[61] from the newsletter Smoke Signals, from the Australian Council on Smoking and Health (ACOSH), that describes a recent case of how the tobacco industry, and its allies, worked together to shape the policy debate.

Box 1: Quoted extract from Australian Council on Smoking and Health, *Smoke Signals*[61]

A new report, Addressing Australia's Illicit Tobacco Market[62], commissioned by Ritchies and prepared by Oxford Economics, is the latest example of industry-aligned voices seeking to shape the policy conversation on illicit tobacco ahead of the Federal Budget.

Ritchies is a member of MGA Independent Retailers, whose top-tier Platinum partners currently include the [tobacco industry] Phillip Morris International "Stop Illicit" initiative.[63] Ritchies has also previously supported Responsible Vaping Australia, a campaign backed by British American Tobacco. These links highlight the importance of carefully scrutinising claims made in reports connected, directly or indirectly, to commercial tobacco interests.

Oxford Economics has a long history of producing industry-commissioned analyses on illicit trade and tobacco taxation, which has been documented by the University of Bath's Tobacco Tactics.[64] While such reports are often presented as independent, their framing frequently aligns with longstanding industry arguments — particularly calls to make tobacco more affordable.

Recommendation 2:

Maintain the federal tobacco excise tax.

Tobacco taxation is the single most effective intervention in reducing tobacco consumption (uptake and quitting), with a World Bank report finding a 10% increase in price is expected to lead to a drop in smoking of around 4%.[65, 66]

Much of the long-term smoking decline in Australia has been a result of young people never taking up smoking rather than people quitting – with price a primary driver of this decline.[50] Price is also the primary reason for quit attempts,[67] as shown in Figure 2.

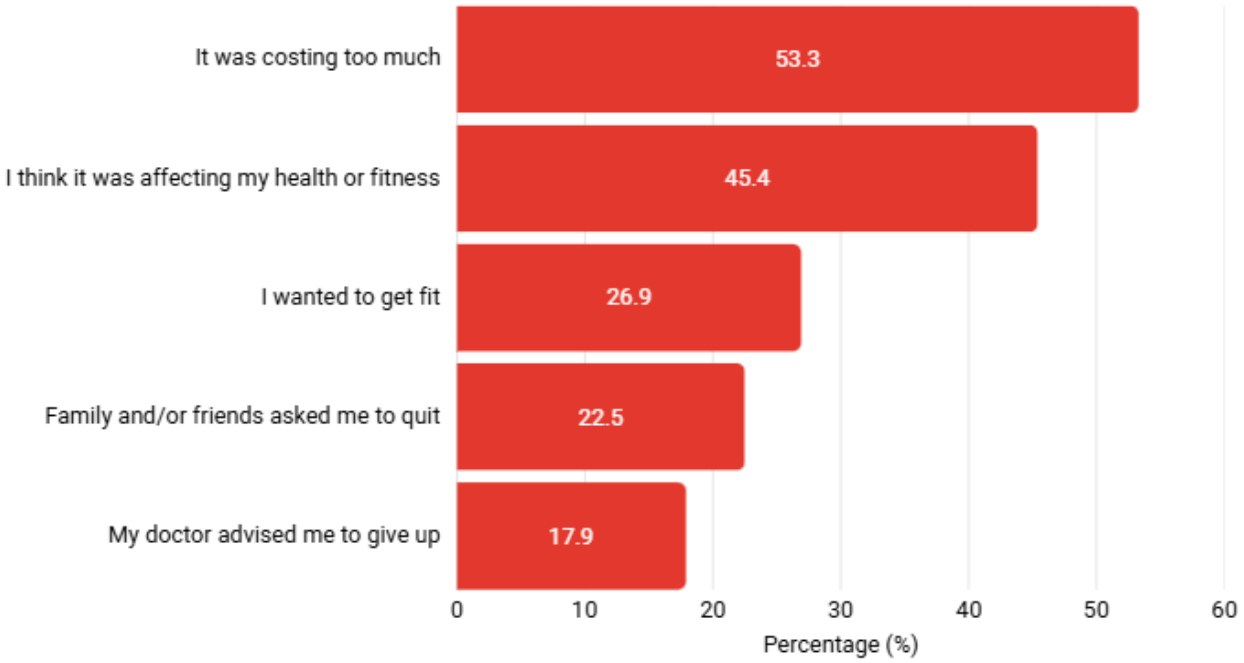


Figure 2: Main reasons for quit smoking attempts.
Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. National Drug Strategy Household Survey, 2022-2023.[67]
Footnote: Selected reasons only. Does not sum to 100% as can select multiple reasons.

Making cigarettes cheaper reduces quit attempts and leads to increased uptake, especially to the most price-sensitive potential 'customers' — those who are young or socially and economically disadvantaged.[68, 69]

Tobacco excise delivers health and economic benefits

The primary aim of tobacco taxation is to reduce tobacco consumption. Tobacco price and taxation increases have been a cornerstone of Australian tobacco policy since 1975 and have been key to reducing consumption to the level we see today.[66] Importantly, the tobacco excise has kept hundreds of thousands of Australians alive and out of hospital.[2]

Since 1975, the largest proportional declines in tobacco consumption have been associated with periods of substantial increases in price, as shown in Figure 3.[66] The largest proportional declines were seen between 2010 and 2015, and between 2015 and 2020 — coinciding with rapid growth in prices associated with tax increases.[66]

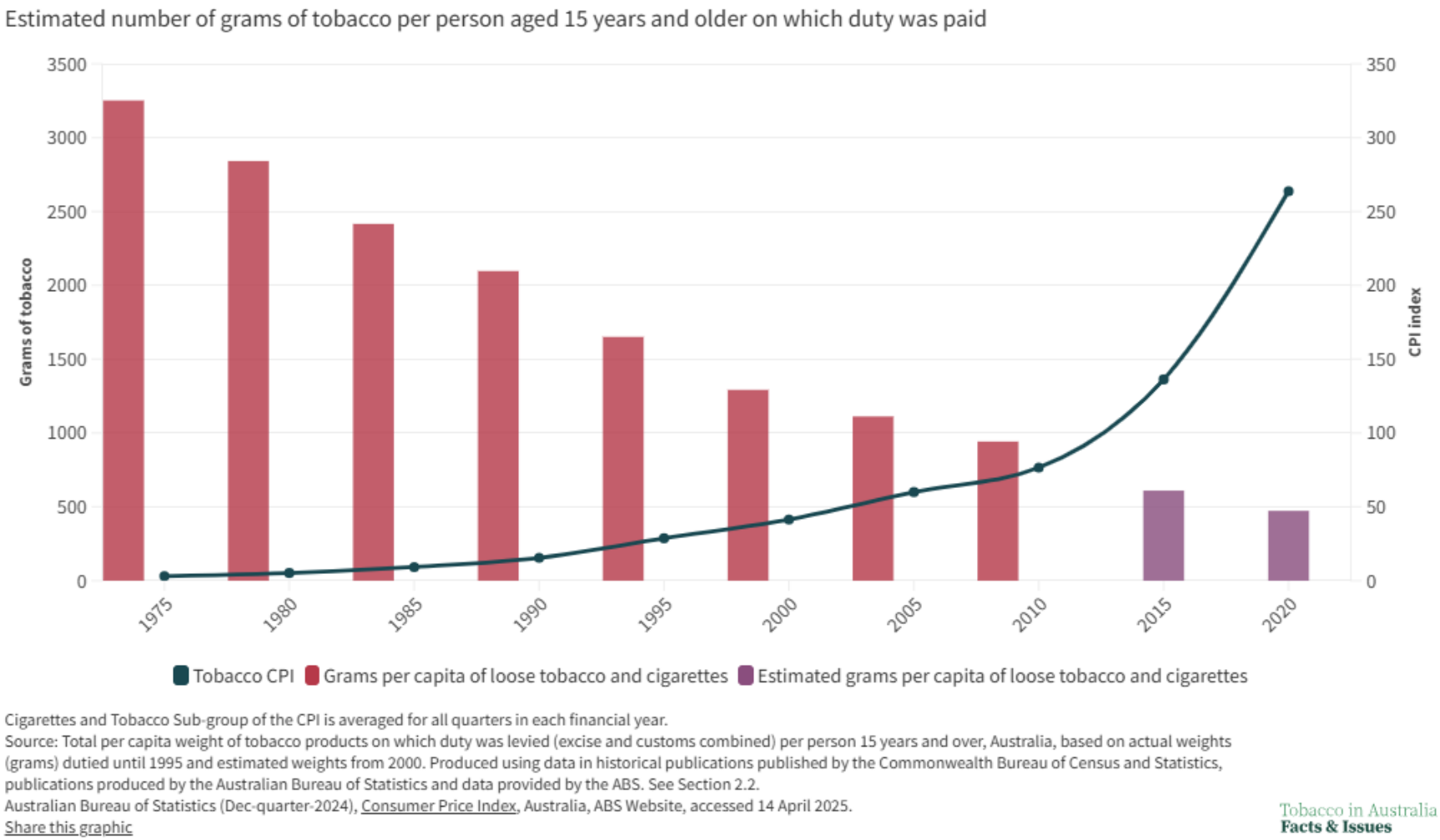


Figure 3: Grams per capita of tobacco products dutied and the Tobacco Consumer Price Index, Australia, 1975 to 2020.
Source credit: Tobacco in Australia, Figure 13.8.1.[66]

Policy support for tobacco tax is high, especially when illicit markets are constrained.[8, 70] The majority of Australians (65%) support taxation, particularly when the resulting funds are used to support discouragement of smoking (e.g., enforcement of smoke-free environments).[70]

Lowering the excise does not prevent illicit markets

The simplistic and unfounded argument favoured by the tobacco industry, which links the tax rate to the size of the illicit market,[71-74] is consistent with its history of supplying the illicit trade with cigarettes while lobbying governments about excise losses from illicit tobacco and thus the (false) need for reduced excise.[75, 76] In addition, strong deterrents, such as fines and jail time, will discourage criminals from participating in the illicit tobacco trade.[77, 78]

Lowering the tobacco tax, thus entering a price competition with the illicit market, will be ineffective in reducing illicit supply and will likely cause significant harm to Australians by increasing overall consumption. The evidence shows that cheaper legal cigarettes do not translate to less illicit trade.[71-74, 79, 80] Globally, nearly every nation[14] has long had extensive black markets[46], including those with much lower tobacco tax than Australia. This includes Canada[81], South Africa[82], Malaysia[83], Vietnam[74, 84]Philippines[85], Senegal[85] and — which all have lower tobacco tax than Australia.

Cigarettes are decidedly cheaper in the United States of America (USA)[81, 86] than in Australia. The cost of a 20-pack of cigarettes in the USA is around $US8 (~$AUD13), with Australian pricing at roughly $AUD45.[87] Yet, illicit tobacco still represents a large proportion of cigarette consumption in the USA (between 8-21%).[17, 88]

United Kingdom: A positive case study

Since 2000, the number of illicit cigarettes consumed in the United Kingdom (UK) has fallen by almost 90%[89], while the average price of a pack of cigarettes has more than tripled due to tax increases.[89] Duty paid cigarette prices increased consistently between 2001 and 2024, making UK cigarette prices among the highest in the world.[87, 90] Figure 4 shows the increase in price of cigarettes over more than 20 years[90] and that, over the same period, this did not result in large illicit tobacco increases. Rather, illicit tobacco declined over this period of increased legal tobacco price.[91]

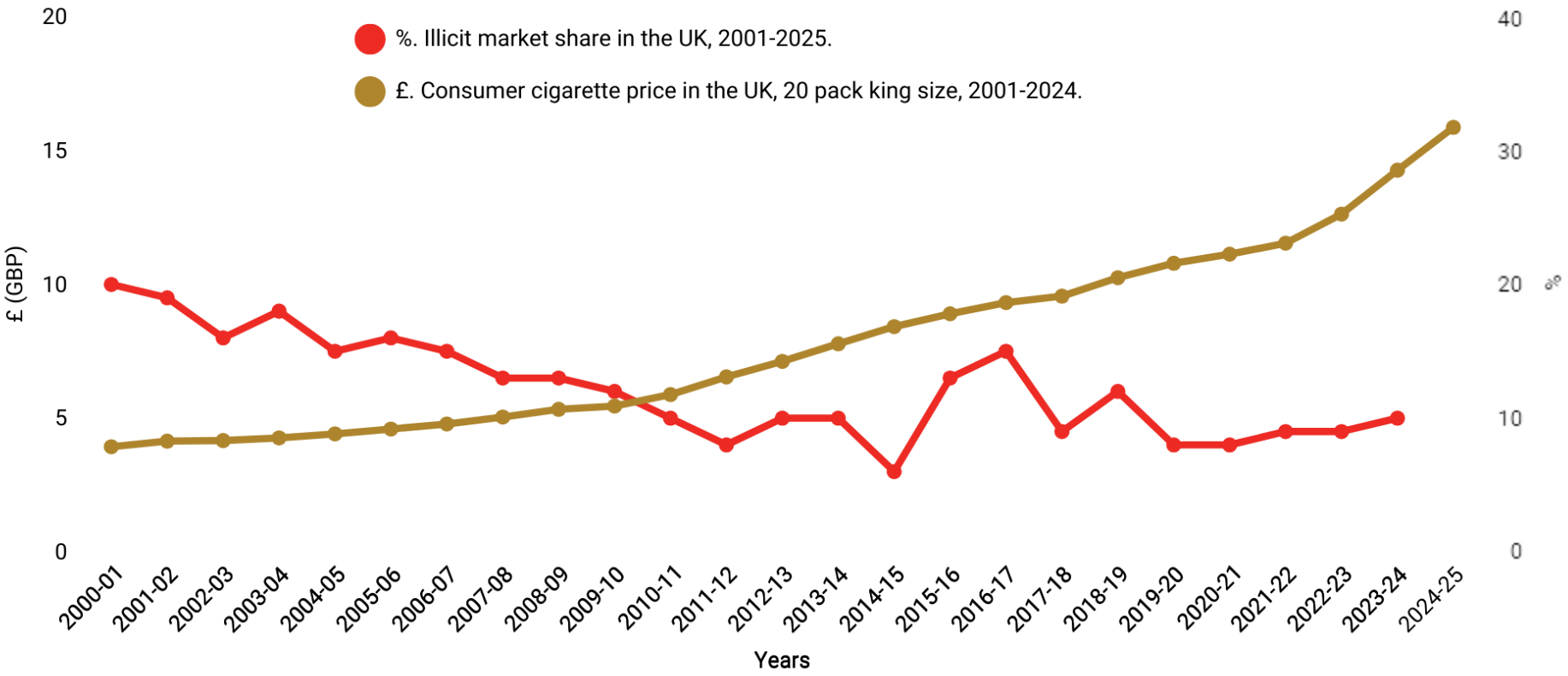


Figure 4: Consumer cigarette price in the UK, adjusted for inflation, 20-pack king size, 2001-2024 and Illicit market share in the UK, 2001-2024.
Source price: Office of National Statistics, RPI: Ave price – cigarettes 20 king size filter.
Source illicit market: UK: HM Revenue & Customs UK. Measuring tax gaps tables. Table 3.11: Cigarettes - illicit market share. Last updated 19/06/2025.[91]

Since 2000, successive UK government strategies and funding commitments have used effective enforcement strategies to cut the illicit market in half[89], alongside measures that have significantly reduced smoking rates – cutting demand for both legal and illegal tobacco.[37, 89] For example, the *UK Illicit Tobacco Strategy 2024-2029*[37] includes several strategies for border force and tax evasion enforcement – supported by more than £100 million in new funding.[37]

Canada: A disastrous case study

In the 1990s, Canada bowed to industry pressure and halved its tobacco taxes.[79, 92] Not surprisingly, it found price-sensitive potential smokers – including children and young people – increased their smoking rates.[93] The tax cut resulted in billions in lost government revenue and did not succeed in curtailing the illicit trade.[94]

To our knowledge, those calling for a reduced tobacco tax in Australia do not specify the quantum of the reduction they believe would make taxed cigarettes competitive with illegal untaxed cigarettes. Box 2 is an extract from an article by Professor Simon Chapman AO, Emeritus Professor in Public Health at the University of Sydney[95] highlighting that a hypothetical 50% reduction (similar to Canada) would do nothing to make taxed cigarettes competitive with untaxed cigarettes. Such a solution would make all tobacco products cheaper, leading to more smoking overall.

The challenge clearly is not to make legal tobacco products more competitive with illicit products but to address the overall exposure to and supply of tobacco through other measures.[96]

Box 2: Quoted extract from *'If expensive cigarettes are driving the Australian black market, why do so many countries with much cheaper cigarettes have thriving black markets too?'* Professor Simon Chapman AO, Emeritus Professor in Public Health at the University of Sydney[95]

The basic arithmetical folly of lowering tobacco tax to reduce illicit trade

The retail price of legal tobacco comprises:
1. excise tax
2. manufacturer's share
3. retailer's share

Basic arithmetic shows this: the current tax of $1.40 per cigarette means $28 excise is already in the mix before the lucrative cuts for both cigarette manufacturers and retailers combine to lift the cost of a pack of 20 at the very low budget brands end of the market to $40. Premium taxed brands can cost well over $50.

So let's imagine the Commonwealth government introduced the radical and globally unprecedented step of slashing excise by a huge 50%, a truly la-la land proposition. This would mean the tax component would fall to 70c a stick, or $14 a pack of 20s. No one, just no one is arguing that manufacturers and retailers would then follow suit and reduce their margins by a comparable percentage in a selfless noble gesture to assist smashing the black market.

This means that our hypothetical 50% reduction in tobacco tax would still mean a tax-paid budget brand would still cost $14 in tax alone, already nudging the high end ($15) of what black market packs cost today. So adding the retailer+manufacturer's combined current margin of $12 to the $14 taxed price component, our fantasy "reduced tax" pack would retail at $26. This would still be blown right out the water by comparable budget black market offerings of $10-$12 a pack.

So even halving tobacco tax would do nothing to make legal taxed cigarettes competitive with cheap smuggled smokes. Freezing tobacco tax or cutting it by even as much as 50% would be equally inconsequential. The "cut-the-tax" house of cards tumbles down in this basic first breeze of evidence.

Australia: learning from ourselves

The weakness in industry argument for a reduction in tobacco excise can be seen in Australia's past experience. Smoking rates have reduced as excise has increased, as shown in Figure 5.[1, 97] The large excise increases that occurred in 2010 occurred at the same time as a decline in illicit tobacco purchasing in Australia, that is, unbranded illicit cigarette use fell from 7.4% in 2004 to 3.3% in 2013.[98]

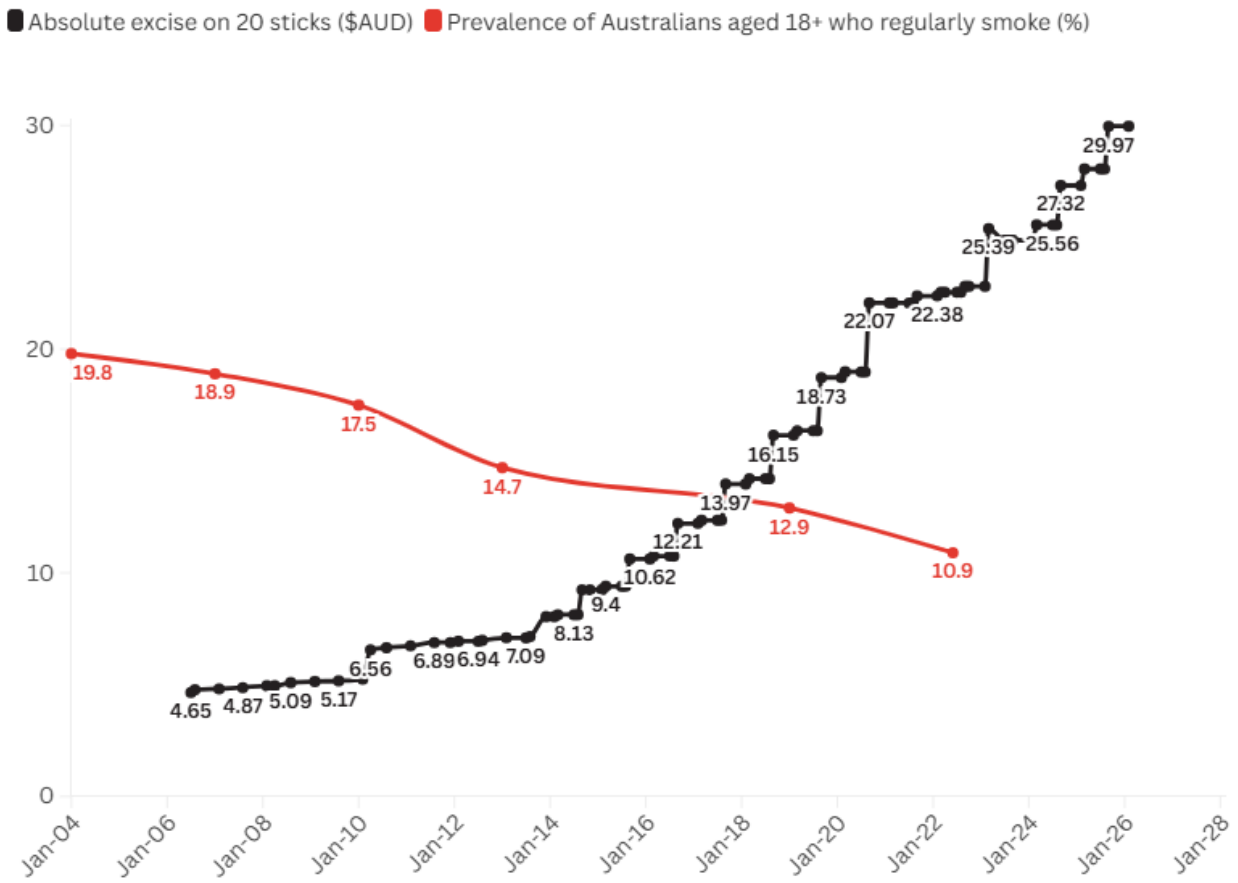


Figure 5: Smoking rates, adults who regularly smoke, 2004-2023, in Australia (red line) – and cigarette tax excise per 20 sticks, 2006-2025, in Australia (black line).

Source tax rates: Australian Taxation Office, Historical Excise Rates.[97] Cigarette tax excise per 20 sticks, 2006-2025, in Australia. *Routine indexation increases occur in March each year.[99] Additional larger increases occurred each September from 2014 to 2020 ($1.13, $1.22, $1.46, $1.63, $1.94, $2.38, and $3.08, respectively) and from 2023 to 2025 (March 2023 $2.58, September 2024 $1.76, September 2025 $1.90).[99]*

Source smoking prevalence: Tobacco in Australia – Facts & Issues.[1]

Footnotes: *Graph edited and reproduced from Tobacco in Australia – Facts & Issues. 2022-23 is the most recent datapoint for smoking rates, from this source, at the time of writing.*

Recommendation 3:

Influence state and territory governments to:

a) **Introduce licensing reforms, including enhancing governance and probity requirements;**

b) **Provide enforcement agencies with the powers to close offending premises and give landlords the power to expel illicit tobacco retailers; and**

c) **Set and enforce significant financial penalties and penal provisions for illicit trade of tobacco products.**

A recent progress scorecard on tobacco control in Australia[100] highlighted deficiencies in current state and territory tobacco laws, which are hampering compliance and enforcement efforts. This scorecard highlighted that some states and territories have low penalties for commercial supply of tobacco and limited power to close premises.[77] Successful enforcement strategies should be implemented across the full supply chain[101] and can involve track-and-trace systems to target organised crime groups that manufacture and supply illicit tobacco.[37]

Recent progress in Western Australia

In March 2026, Western Australia passed the first tranche of new laws through Parliament to introduce stronger penalties and closure powers for businesses caught selling illicit tobacco.[102] In a recent survey, the WA public strongly backed tough new laws on tobacco.[7] The state's penalties are now some of the strongest in the country, with the maximum penalty for possession of a large commercial quantity of illicit tobacco and vaping products of $4.2 million for an individual or $21 million for a company, and 15 years imprisonment. Store closure orders were also introduced, so that businesses supplying illegal products can be shut down while investigations take place. The first tranche also includes amendments to extend enforcement powers, for example, the seizure of prohibited products from young persons.[103]

These reforms are supported by a new multi-agency enforcement taskforce – including more staff in the Department of Health's Tobacco Compliance Unit— so that powers can be used effectively on the ground.[104] A second tranche of licensing and tobacco control reforms has been foreshadowed later in 2026.[102]

Everywhere, all-day, every day – an opportunity for licensing reform

In Australia, it is easier to buy tobacco than it is to buy fresh fruit and vegetables. Current laws allow cigarettes to be sold by almost anyone, anywhere, at any time and in all types of outlets. This opportunity has been exploited by criminals to unlawfully distribute untaxed cigarettes in brick-and-mortar outlets.

Tobacco products are available across more than 40,000 shops in Australia[105, 106,107] — yet they serve just one in 10 people who smoke daily.[1] For context, this means for every one supermarket,[108] there are six more shops selling tobacco – often open for extended trading hours across all days of the week. A growing number of shops have been found to be selling tobacco both legally and illegally.[17, 109] We need to lift the standards for those who are allowed to be licensed to sell tobacco, through strong governance and probity requirements. This will mean only

those businesses that are competent to comply with the law are allowed to sell tobacco — reducing the overall supply of tobacco.

Figure 6 compares the number of tobacco, petrol and supermarket outlets available to people who use them (outlets available for every one person who smokes, shops at supermarkets and drives respectively).

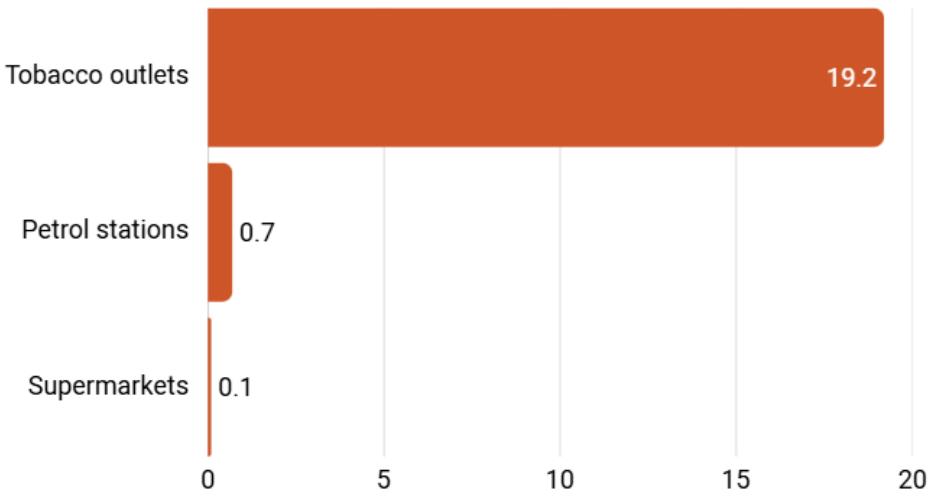


Figure 6: Number of tobacco outlets, petrol stations and major supermarkets per 1,000 people who use them, in Australia
Sources outlets: ~40,000 tobacco outlets[107], ~3,050 major supermarkets[108], ~11,350 petrol stations[110].
Sources users: smokers (total regular smoking in 2022-23 10.0%[1] of adult population (18 years old+) in June 2023 20,883,717[111], = 2,088,372), Australian population (total in June 2025, = 27,614,411[112]), drivers (private cars registered =16,080,000 in 2025[113]).

At the time of publishing, no Australian state or territory directly regulates tobacco outlet density, location (e.g., near schools) or type (restricting sales to shops with tightly controlled supply chains that avoid illicit tobacco).[106, 114] By contrast, alcohol sales in Australia are limited to specialist shops with stronger controls on supply chains.

Lifting the standards for tobacco licences and reducing the overall supply of tobacco

Illicit tobacco is mainly sold in brick-and-mortar outlets,[115] most of which have a licence to sell tobacco legally, such as convenience stores.[41] The increase in tobacco retailers, some of which sell cigarettes both legally and illegally, makes enforcement of existing laws challenging – given the volume of tobacco retailers to oversee. Reducing and capping tobacco licences will help address the surplus of retailers and support enforcement by significantly reducing the number of outlets to inspect.[77, 116]

Regulating tobacco outlet density aligns with Action 8.6 of the *National Tobacco Strategy 2023-2030*.[34] to regulate where tobacco products are retailed; the number of tobacco retail licences granted; and the location of outlets. We recommend caps on the number of licences per suburb

and region, as well as the prohibition of licences in areas within prescribed distances from schools and community services.

Research shows that reducing the number of tobacco stores (density and proximity, and therefore the accessibility of tobacco products) helps reduce the uptake of smoking by children and young people,[117] increases quit attempts and decreases relapse.[118-120] Further, tobacco outlet density is more concentrated in places where people on lower incomes live[121] and is associated with higher rates of smoking.[122] Research has also shown that each additional tobacco retail outlet in WA within 1,600 metres of where people live is associated with a 2% increase in their odds of heart disease.[122]

Specific licensing and control opportunities include:

- Introducing a **national public register of licensed tobacco outlet retailers and wholesalers**. This could assist authorities with enforcement by closing interstate loopholes and enabling streamlined compliance and intelligence-sharing.
- **Increasing licensing fees** to encourage small retailers to voluntarily end sales, in turn, reducing retail density and contributing to greater denormalisation of tobacco sales.[123]
- **Setting licence fees at levels sufficient to fund robust compliance monitoring and enforcement activities**. This ensures that regulatory bodies have the resources needed to conduct inspections, investigate breaches and maintain oversight of the legal tobacco trade.
- **Enhancing tobacco licence requirements[96]**, especially stronger governance and probity requirements. For example, licences should not be approved for outlets with dishonest applications, poor supply chain control, and those previously involved in the manufacturing, supply or distribution of illicit tobacco. This can be enacted by **establishing strong fit-and-proper criteria** for obtaining and operating a tobacco retail or wholesale licence, including rigorous eligibility standards that ensure only individuals or entities with a demonstrated ability to comply with all licence conditions are granted licences. This would help prevent undesirable actors from entering or remaining in the legal tobacco market and reduce tobacco tax evasion throughout the retail sector. Fit-and-proper criteria should be subject to robust assessment. Changes in licensee circumstance should be subject to immediate mandatory reporting.
- Capping **the number of tobacco retail licences** (e.g., X per suburb, region, state).
- Restricting **the location of tobacco licences**, particularly those near schools and community facilities. This should apply to both new development applications and existing stores upon licence renewal.
- Allowing **local governments to enact powers** to limit the location of new tobacco retail outlets, such as the City of Vincent's *Local Planning Policy in WA*.[124] However, it is noted that this strategy is resource-intensive and may not suit all local governments.
- **Prohibiting wholesalers from selling to unlicensed retailers**, including making penalties stronger and resourcing enforcement adequately.

- Increasing the period a **person convicted** of selling illegal products is **prohibited** from engaging in tobacco retailing.
- Making it **an offence for licence holders** (retailers and wholesalers) **to supply or possess any quantity of tobacco products non-compliant** with federal product, packaging, customs or excise laws, including higher penalties for supply or possession of commercial quantities.
- Enabling **authorities to enter and search** suspected illicit tobacco retail and wholesale premises.
- Introducing **suitable powers to close premises** found to be selling illicit tobacco.
- Enabling **prosecution of landlords** who knowingly lease to retailers selling illegal products.
- Setting and enforcing significant **financial penalties and penal provisions** for illicit trade in tobacco products.[14]

Community support is strong for measures to address tobacco

In December 2025, a national survey by the Cancer Council's Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer found that the majority of Australians believe tobacco is too easy to access and want governments to significantly lift the bar on who can sell it.[125] Specifically, Australians supported:

- There are too many shops selling tobacco (64%)
- It is very easy for Australians who smoke to buy illegal tobacco products right now (75%)
- Retailers should be required to prove they can keep staff safe and store products securely (82%)
- Strict record-keeping requirements (77%)
- Preventing anyone with criminal associations from holding a licence (73%)[125]

Another national survey, the National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2022–2023, found the level of support for multiple tobacco policies had increased between 2019 and 2022-2023.[8] For example, the majority of Australians reported support for:

- Making it harder to buy tobacco in shops (65%, up from 61%). [8]
- Implementing a national licensing scheme for tobacco retailers (68%, up from 67%).

The majority of Western Australians[7] back new laws to address illicit tobacco:

- 71% support the government acting quickly to close gaps allowing illicit tobacco sales
- More than half say local shops selling illegal tobacco make their community feel less safe
- Two-thirds believe illicit tobacco is easy to access right now.

Figure 7 provides a detailed list – derived from Tobacco in Australia[126] – of selected laws implemented in some states and territories, but not uniformly across jurisdictions, to prevent and respond to illicit trade in tobacco, vapes and other non-therapeutic nicotine products.[126] This list represents a starting point to harmonise laws across jurisdictions. We note that this table does not reflect the recent law reforms enacted in Western Australia in March 2026.[102]

	ACT	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	Tas	Vic	WA
Features of tobacco licensing scheme intended to restrict sales to licensed operators								
Positive licensing scheme	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Applies to tobacco retailers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Applies to tobacco wholesalers	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Offence to sell tobacco products without a licence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wholesalers selling to unlicensed retailers restricted	✓[22]	✓[23]	X	✓[24]	X	X	✓[25]	✓[26]
Retailers purchasing from unlicensed wholesalers restricted	✓[27]	X	X	X	X	X	✓[28]	X
Licence conditions may be prescribed by regulation	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Public register of licensees	✓[29]	✓[30]	✓[31]	✓[32]	✓[33]	X	✓[34]	✓[35]
Licensees required to retain historical sales records	X	✓[36]	X	✓[37]	✓[38]	✓[39]	✓[40]	✓[41]
Licensees can be required to report on sales volumes	X	✓[42]	✓[43]	✓[44]	✓[45]	X	✓[46]	✓[47]
Online sales prohibited	X	X	X	X	✓[48]	X	X	X
Regulatory tools and enforcement powers to address illicit trade								
Definition of 'illicit tobacco'	No definition included	Yes[49]	No definition included	Yes[50]	No definition included	Yes[51] (proposed law)	Yes[52]	Yes[53] (proposed law)
Ability to prescribe further Cth requirements by regulation	Yes[54]	Yes[55]	N/A	Yes[56]	N/A	Yes[57] (proposed law)	Yes[58]	Yes[59] (proposed law)
Products non-compliant with federal customs or excise laws are covered by 'illicit tobacco' definition or equivalent state-based offences	X	X	X	X	✓[60]	✓[61] (proposed law)	✓[62]	✓[63]
Products non-compliant with federal packaging or product requirements are covered by 'illicit tobacco' definition or equivalent state-based offences	✓[64]	✓[65]	X[66] (refers to previous but not current Australian legislation)	✓[67]	✓[68]	✓[69] (proposed law)	✓[70]	✓[71]
High penalties for commercial supply of 'illicit tobacco'	X	✓[72]	X	✓[73]	✓[74]	✓[75] (proposed law)	✓[76]	✓[77] (proposed law)
High penalties for commercial possession of 'illicit tobacco'	X	✓[78]	X	✓[79]	✓[80]	✓[81] (proposed law)	✓[82]	✓[83] (proposed law)
Offence under the licensing scheme for retailers to possess illicit tobacco in non-commercial quantities	X	X	X	X	X	✓[84] (if equal to or in excess of 50 cigarettes or 50g of product)	✓[85]	X
Offence under the licensing scheme to supply 'illicit vapes'	✓[86]	✓[87] (for the purposes of closure order, inspection, seizure and disposal powers)	X	✓[88]	✓[89]	✓[90]	X	✓[91] (proposed law)
Offence under the licensing scheme to supply 'illicit nicotine pouches'	X	X	X	✓[92]	✓[93]	X	X	X
Licences issued with a general condition prohibiting illicit trade	X	X	X	X	✓[94] (only applicable to retailers)	X	X	X

	ACT	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	Tas	Vic	WA
Power to ban other products (future-proofing)	✓[95]	✓[96]	X	✓[97]	✓[98]	✓[99] (proposed law)	✓[100]	✓[101] (proposed law)
Power to close premises (closure orders)	X	✓[102]	X	✓[103]	✓[104]	✓[105] (proposed law)	X	✓[106] (proposed law)
Information on closure orders may be made public	N/A	✓[107]	N/A	X	✓[108]	✓[109] (proposed law)	N/A	✓[110] (proposed law)
Penalties for trading from a premises subject to a closure order	N/A	✓[111]	N/A	✓[112]	✓[113]	✓[114] (proposed law)	N/A	✓[115] (proposed law)
Landlord may terminate lease of premises subject to a closure order	N/A	✓[116]	N/A	✓[117]	✓[118]	X	N/A	X
Landlord may face penalties if leased premises used for illicit trade	X	[119] (proposed law)	X	✓[120]	✓[121]	X	X	X
Power to accept enforceable undertakings	X	X	X	X	✓[122]	X	✓[123]	X
Power to issue licensees with directions/ orders to remedy non-compliance	✓[124]	X	X	✓[125]	✓[126]	X	✓[127]	✓
Licence can be suspended or cancelled	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Power to immediately cancel/ suspend a licence (i.e. show cause process not required)	X	✓[128] (if a long-term closure order is issued)	X	✓[129]	X	X	✓[130]	X
Licensee can be disqualified from holding a licence	✓[131]	X	X	X	✓[132]	X	✓[133]	✓[134]
Controlled purchase operations	✓[135]	X	X	✓[136]	✓[137]	X	X	✓[138]
Drugs, weapons, and explosives searches at licensed tobacco premises	X	X	X	X	✓[139]	X	X	X
Use of detection dogs during searches	X	X	X	X	✓[140]	X	X	X
Minimum pricing of tobacco products	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Minimum physical security requirements for premises	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Power to enter and search premises during business hours, with consent or under a warrant	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Figure 7: Features of state and territory tobacco licensing schemes that prevent and respond to the illicit trade of tobacco, vapes and other non-therapeutic nicotine products
Sources: Tobacco in Australia, Table 13A.9.2 Features of state and territory tobacco licensing schemes that prevent and respond to the illicit trade of tobacco, vapes and other non-therapeutic nicotine products.[126]

For a comprehensive description of each state and territory tobacco licensing scheme, see Table 11B.1 in Tobacco in Australia: Facts and Issues.[127]

Minor recommendations

Recommendation 4:

Expand the focus from tobacco to include other nicotine products sold illegally (for example, vapes and nicotine pouches).

Almost all (96%) vapes sold are illicit.[17] Many vapes are being sold in the same shops as illicit cigarettes[41] and contain high levels of addictive nicotine which, upon reaching the brain, initiate an unnatural flood of dopamine within seconds of consumption.[128] Within hours of consumption, withdrawal symptoms can start – including irritability, anxiety, anger, difficulty staying focused and impatience.[128]

Research shows that Australian teenagers who have vaped are up to five times more likely to smoke.[45] Strengthening illicit vape and other nicotine product controls is essential – because vapes are being sold cheaply to children and young people – with disregard for age requirements.[41] Given this, we urge that the scope of this inquiry should include all nicotine products, including but not limited to, tobacco, vapes and nicotine pouches.

Recommendation 5:

Invest in a national tobacco and nicotine public education campaign to build public policy support for legislation to address illicit tobacco.

Policy change is essential to tobacco control. Public education campaigns are a critical tool for raising awareness of health issues and helping to build support for policy and legislative change. In Australia, these have played an important role in building acceptance for tobacco control policies over many years.[129] The *Integrative Public-Policy Acceptance* (IPAC) framework[130] outlines six key components to the acceptance of a policy. These are outlined in Table 1, adapted from the original framework[130].

Table 1: Definitions of the IPAC Framework's key components and examples of its application to the acceptance of illicit tobacco control policies (adapted from source[130])

Component	Definition	Example: laws to cap tobacco outlets for suburbs.
Problem awareness	The extent to which people are aware of or concerned about a certain politically relevant problem.	The extent to which people are aware that rising (illicit) tobacco sales is an issue for public health, crime and other related issues.
Support seeking characteristics	Personal characteristics that affect people's desire for governmental support in a certain domain, that is personal and political attitudes and beliefs, such as trust in government and the extent to which people attribute control and responsibility to government versus themselves.	The extent to which people trust the government to act in a way that promotes their health and wellbeing in the context of (illicit) tobacco control. The extent to which people attribute control and responsibility to mitigate illicit tobacco to the government versus themselves.
Desire for governmental support	The extent to which people are motivated to seek support from the government in a certain politically relevant domain.	The extent to which people are motivated to desire governmental support to reduce population levels of illicit tobacco consumption.
Policy qualities	How people evaluate a specific policy regarding certain qualities, including the effectiveness, transparency, intrusiveness, perceived fairness, costs, and benefits attached to the policy, that is how transparent, effective, fair and intrusive people perceive the policy to be.	The extent to which people perceive that a law to cap tobacco outlets is transparent, effective, fair, non-intrusive and a better option as a tobacco control measure
Policy acceptance	The extent to which people accept the introduction of a specific public policy addressing a certain politically relevant problem (attitudinal component).	The extent to which people accept a law to cap tobacco outlets to reduce (illicit) tobacco consumption.
Policy compliance	The extent to which the policy is effective.	The extent of illicit tobacco sales.

Footnote: table adapted from source.[130]

In line with the IPAC, an effective campaign approach would highlight the role of the tobacco industry in the illicit tobacco trade, expose deceitful tactics and provide an opportunity to report where illicit tobacco is being solid in communities.[131] For example, campaigns can raise community awareness of the links between illicit tobacco and organised crime,[17] as well as the tobacco industry's long history of complicity in tobacco smuggling.[132] In turn, building support for policy action to address illicit tobacco by raising awareness of the extent of illicit trade of tobacco and its criminal consequences (e.g., human trafficking, firebombing, murders). This could build community support for further strengthening of laws by state and territory governments.[133]

Figure 8 provides examples, where the Western Australian government designed such campaigns to build support for law reforms to cigarette advertising.[129]



Figure 8: Selection of adverts from the Western Australian Government and Western Australian based organisations to build public support for a Bill to ban cigarette advertising.
Source: Industry Documents at UCSF[129], page 38 onwards.

The current funding for a National Tobacco and E-cigarette Public Health campaign[134] has a focus on 'motivations and behaviours of people who use illicit tobacco', which suggests the campaign may try to persuade people to not buy cheaper illicit cigarettes. Arguments that emphasise individual smokers doing the 'right thing' by choosing to buy legal but more expensive cigarettes ignores the well-established evidence that price has been the most impactful policy action on reducing smoking rates.[135] Assigning responsibility by either blaming or empowering the nicotine-addicted smoker is a decades old industry tactic.[38, 133, 136] Such an approach is destined to fail at reducing the number of people smoking.

The Commonwealth Assistant Minister for Customs and Multicultural Affairs has said that "Whilst the Australian Government's Give Up for Good campaign is seeing promising results, the immediate priority now is our focus on serious and organised crime."[96] We believe these are not mutually exclusive – we suggest that campaign funding can be funnelled towards supporting action on serious and organised crime. To illustrate, we recommended that all government public education campaigns for tobacco control focus on building awareness and support for policy reforms, rather than individualised behaviour change, and include messaging such as:

- Highlighting how a particular policy is fair, what its goals are and how effective it is
- Outlining how a particular policy is non-intrusive
- Highlighting the role of the tobacco industry in spreading misinformation
- Highlight how the tobacco industry provides 'donations' to political parties
- Highlighting the tobacco and criminal industry as the cause of tobacco issues
- Proposing law reforms as the solution
- Frame the illicit tobacco as a population, not an individual, issue
- Highlight the population health harms of tobacco.

Such an approach will be effective at both maintaining individual responsibility and growing support for policy and law reforms.

Recommendation 6:

Strengthen cross-agency collaboration to target, disrupt and dismantle serious crime actors.

As highlighted in the 2020 Commonwealth inquiry into illicit tobacco,[137] organised crime groups are involved at every stage of the illicit tobacco supply chain – from importation and cultivation to wholesale and retail distribution. Likely due to widespread media coverage, Australians are aware of the criminal activity and around half of Western Australians agree that local shops that sell tobacco illegally make their community feel less safe.[7]

In 2024-2025, organised crime proceeds from the illicit market were estimated at $5.6 billion.[17] Crimes related to selling illicit tobacco increased markedly from around 2018 and include reports of fire-bombings, murders and other serious crimes.[44]

Several key agencies are involved in dismantling organised crime:

- In 2018, the Australian Taxation Office established an **Illicit Tobacco Taskforce** with the aim of "proactively targeting, disrupting and dismantling serious actors and organised crime syndicates that deal in illicit tobacco".
- In 2024, an **Illicit Tobacco and E-Cigarette Commissioner** was established, who sits within the Australian Border Force to combat the threat of illicit tobacco and e-cigarettes.[17, 138]
- The Australian Federal Police leads the **Criminal Assets Confiscation Taskforce** (CACT) to target criminal groups involved in the illicit trade.[134]
- The **Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre** (AUSTRAC) receives funding for targeting, disrupting and dismantling serious crime actors and organised crime syndicates dealing in illicit tobacco – with a focus on disrupting money laundering as a key enabler of the growth of the illicit tobacco market. For example, examining money laundering at cash ATMs and cryptocurrency ATMs.

All agencies involved in dismantling serious crime (state and federal) should continue to collaborate — with the aim of sharing information between cross-sector agencies to disrupt criminal activity. Those selling illicit tobacco and the serious criminals leading organised crime must be stopped through strong laws, licensing requirements and capacity for enforcement – as well as a strengthening of tobacco control measures.

Recommendation 7:

Establish a national hotline for community to report outlets suspected of selling illicit tobacco.

Most Australians want more policy action on tobacco,[8] including illicit tobacco.[7] This considerable community concern about tobacco and illicit tobacco provides an opportunity to engage community members in reporting suspected illicit tobacco retailers. While existing reporting structures exist, there is no clear single place to make reports.[139] For example, for WA alone, Crime Stoppers recommends five different places to make reports.[139] A national hotline could be used to support information sharing with cross-sector agencies.

A national hotline capitalising on citizens' frustration with local illegal activity could help identify shops selling illegal tobacco and vapes. This could be expanded to include face-to-face community workshops where the public may voice their concerns about illicit tobacco.

By contrast, the tobacco industry (Phillip Morris [Australia] Limited) has created a website to accept reports, 'Stop Illicit'[140], perhaps to distract collective action and support for regulation. As individuals make reports, they may feel their 'job is done' once they have made a report – effectively crowding out further action.[141] The reporting to industry may be detrimental to policy support, as:

- Industry propaganda about ineffective solutions may be pushed on those who make illicit tobacco reports, such as calls to lower tobacco taxes as a way to address illicit tobacco.
- Data that is reported is unlikely to be shared with relevant government agencies.

- People reporting are unknown to government, so agencies responsible for enforcement are unable to update them on progress in enforcement activity, such as shop closures, fines and seizures.

A national government hotline should serve as a single place to make reports. These reports should be responded to, for example, with general updates on enforcement activity, such as shop closures, fines and seizures– building further community collective action and capitalising on the frustrations of everyday Australians who want more policy action on illicit tobacco.[7, 8]

Recommendation 8:

Introduce a national system for real-time verification of excise or customs duty paid on tobacco and nicotine products.

The illicit tobacco industry has started to produce cigarettes in plain packaging that mimics the legal product.[142] The system should ensure illicit products can be identified, even if they are good replicas of legal taxed products. Real-time verification is the basis of a track-and-trace system to secure the distribution system, in line with Article 15 of the *Treaty, the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control* (FCTC).[53]

A national system that enables real-time verification of excise or customs duty would allow enforcement agencies (territory, state and national) to check if payment has been made on tobacco products at any point in the supply chain. This would enhance transparency, reduce fraud and strengthen enforcement capabilities. Such a system must be independent of industry.[142]

Recommendation 9:

Expand existing funding commitments for enforcement and detection equipment to make the illegal tobacco trade more risky and less profitable for criminals.

As the Commonwealth Assistant Minister for Customs and Multicultural Affairs recently highlighted – we need to raise "the cost of doing business" for criminals.[96] Making it more difficult for criminals to sell illicit tobacco involves steps along the whole supply chain, including pre-border and post-border, to make illicit tobacco more risky and less profitable.

Agencies will need to work together with consistent priorities and protocols to share intelligence, to drive coordinated action. Enforcement would include interrupting criminal finances, including criminal activity cash flow and money laundering. It would also include expansion of existing Commonwealth commitments for inspections and border control detection.[134] For example, more dogs can be trained to detect illicit drugs, nicotine and cigarettes.[14, 134]

Expanding existing funding commitments[134] would allow for growth of enforcement teams and purchasing of detection equipment, including x-ray scanners and tobacco detection 'sniffer' dogs, including those involved in enforcement employed by health, border force and police.

Recent announcements by the Commonwealth Government are welcomed, including greater financial consequences, new offences, prosecutions for unexplained wealth, and enhanced law enforcement techniques such as wiretaps.[96]

Recommendation 10:

Fund a free course of Nicotine Replacement Therapy and counselling for all smokers who call the Quitline.

It is recommended that Australians who smoke be provided with free access to up to two 12-week supplies of Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) per year (e.g., Nicotinell and Nicorette nicotine patches) under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme,[143] provided they have a medical prescription and participate in cessation counselling.[143] For example, Quitline in Queensland combines free nicotine replacement therapy mailed to participants with four weeks of telephone-based counselling, and up to 12 months of follow-up.[144] Providing free NRT, especially to people on lower incomes, has been shown to increase the proportion of people who successfully quit and remain abstinent. [143, 145] [144]

Strategies to increase the effectiveness of NRT across the population include[42]:

- Increasing the uptake of NRT (e.g., reducing price and increasing availability)
- Providing behavioural support
- Avoiding underdosing and low adherence to using the drug as intended
- Using both long-acting and faster-acting NRT
- Using for extended periods (e.g., more than four weeks)
- Continuing to use after relapse (where applicable).[42]

To address some of the above strategies, providing free NRT for callers of the Quitline may increase quit attempts and success – especially if this can be combined with behavioural counselling, potentially via the Quitline.

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