

MEDIA RELEASE

Cheaper Cigarettes Will Kill More Australians – Open Letter to Australia’s Political Leaders

Embargoed until 12am Wednesday 7 October

Over 30 of Australia’s leading peak health bodies, alongside doctors, nurses and community advocates, have today written to every federal parliamentarian urging them to reject policies that would make cigarettes cheaper and vapes more widely available — and kill more Australians.

The signatories – including the Australian Council on Smoking and Health (ACOSH), the Australian Medical Association (AMA), Lung Foundation Australia, the National Heart Foundation, Thoracic Society of Australia & New Zealand, Cancer Council Australia, Public Health Association of Australia and the Australian College of Nurses – represent over thirty major health and community organisations.

“We are absolutely committed to ending the serious issue of the illicit tobacco and nicotine trade,” said Laura Hunter, CEO of ACOSH.

“But slashing tobacco excise and weakening vaping laws is not the solution. You cannot price-match criminals who can manufacture a packet of illicit cigarettes for less than a dollar.

“Canada tried drastic tobacco tax cuts in the 1990s. Cigarettes became cheaper, smoking increased, and the illicit trade eventually rebounded. The policy contributed to an estimated 30,000 additional tobacco-related deaths, more disease and avoidable healthcare costs.

“Federal MPs need to weigh the evidence — and their conscience. Cheaper cigarettes are not a crime-fighting strategy. They are a recipe for more addiction, more illness and more Australians dying prematurely.”

Instead, the organisations are calling for a multipronged national response to illicit tobacco: stronger border and supply-chain controls; a smaller, better-regulated retail network; tough and consistent penalties; and sustained, well-funded enforcement across every jurisdiction.

“Every day doctors see the devastating impact of tobacco use and nicotine dependence on patients, families and communities,” said AMA President-elect Dr Michael Bonning.

“Australia’s tobacco control success has been built on evidence-based policies. We should continue investing in measures that help people quit smoking, including accessible nicotine replacement therapy and other proven cessation supports.”

“Selling cigarettes is a dying business, as the tobacco industry well knows,” said Lung Foundation Australia CEO Mark Brooke.

“Our elected leaders should hasten its end and protect Australians, not hand the industry a tax cut that lets it regain market share, add new customers and keep people smoking longer.”

[Read the Joint Letter here](#)

SUPPORT RESOURCES

- Quitline: Call 13 7848 (13 QUIT) for free, confidential coaching and support.
- Quit.org.au: for digital tools and resources.
- GP Consultation: Speak to your local doctor about Medicare-subsidised nicotine replacement therapies (NRT) and prescription options.

TO REPORT SUSPECTED ILLICIT TOBACCO OR VAPE SALES:

- Border Watch – 1800 395 706 or borderwatch.gov.au
- Crime Stoppers – 1800 333 000 or crimestoppers.com.au

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