



Tobacco 21

Position Statement

March 2021

No Harm, No Discrimination

atdc
Alcohol, Tobacco and other
Drugs Council Tasmania



Tasmania has the second highest tobacco usage in the country and the ATDC supports any initiatives that seek to reduce the number of people that smoke

T21 legislation is a strategy to help prevent and delay the initiation of tobacco product use

The ATDC continues to support the introduction of the Public Health Amendment (Prevention of sale of smoking products to underage persons) Bill 2018

In providing this support, the ATDC acknowledges that this change will not be the sole remedy for Tasmania's above-average smoking rates and any initiative must be implemented alongside a suite of evidence-based measures and initiatives, particularly targeting Tasmanians most at risk

Introduction

In March 2021, Tasmanian Parliament will again debate the *Public Health Amendment (Prevention of sale of smoking products to underage persons) Bill 2018*. This Amendment Bill provides for raising the age to 21 for people to whom smoking products, including tobacco and electronic vaping devices, may be sold. The current legislation states that smoking products must not be sold to people under 18 years of age. The aim of this Amendment Bill is to reduce the uptake of smoking amongst young people in Tasmania.

Recent data shows that 95% of smokers start before the age of 21 and research shows that if young people get to 21 without smoking, they are far less likely to start.¹

Tobacco smoking is the leading cause of preventable disease and premature death in Australia, with long term smoking killing two in three users.² Tobacco smoking is known to cause 16 different types of cancer, heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, pulmonary diseases including asthma, Type 2 diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and osteoporosis, adult periodontal disease as well as many other health harms.³

¹ Minderoo Foundation Smoking Campaign information accessed on 31 May 2019 at <https://www.minderoo.com.au/stop-smoking-before-it-starts/news/tough-campaign-implores-australia-to-stop-smoking-before-it-starts/>

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Report*, December 2018, accessed on 30 May 2019 at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-tobacco-other-drugs-australia/contents/drug-types/tobacco>

³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Evidence for Chronic Disease risk factors*, April 2016, accessed on 31 May 2019 at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/chronic-disease/evidence-for-chronic-disease-risk-factors/contents/behavioural-and-biomedical-risk-factors>



Tasmanian statistics

Tasmania has some alarming statistics in relation to smoking:

- Approximately 70 500 Tasmanians are current smokers
- Tasmania has the second highest smoking rate in Australia (behind the Northern Territory) at around 17.6% of the population compared with 13.8% nationally⁴
- Young Tasmanians are making up a large proportion of these people with 22.6% of 18-24 year olds in Tasmania currently smoking.⁵ This is significantly higher than the number of young people smoking in other parts of the country (New South Wales with 10.7%, Victoria with 12.1% and Western Australia with 15.5%)
- While in Tasmania, smoking rates have fallen to an all-time low of 16.4% for current smokers, tobacco is still a significant driver of deaths in Tasmanians with over 500 people dying every year – far exceeding the number of people dying from alcohol, illicit drugs, homicides, assaults, road accidents and suicides all added together
- The ATDC is conscious that tobacco smoking rates are higher in certain parts of society. For example, lower socio-economic groups, regional and rural populations, aboriginal people, people engaged in AOD treatment and/or who have mental health conditions have higher rates of smoking.
- Tasmania has a higher % of people living under the poverty line than the national average.

These statistics are alarming to the ATDC and our members, and we support any initiative which seeks to reduce these statistics. We believe that the implementation of the proposed Amendment Bill will improve the health outcomes for some of Tasmania's most vulnerable community members.

⁴ ABS, 2018, *National Health Survey: First results*, accessed online 16/3/2021, found here:

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/health-conditions-and-risks/national-health-survey-first-results/2017-18>

⁵ Wells Economic Analysis, 2020, *T21: Raising the minimum age for tobacco sales in Tasmania to 21 years*, p23. Accessed online 16/2/2021, found here: <https://cdn.tobacco21.com.au/content/uploads/2020/09/15133948/Wells-Economic-Analysis-2020.pdf>



Public Support

The devastating health impacts of smoking are evident and in recent years there has been growing public support for legislation restricting the sale and supply of tobacco. Cancer Council Tasmania undertook research in 2016 which indicated strong community support for raising the legal age of smoking to 21 years of age. This research reported that 72% of Tasmanians surveyed (1,001 individuals) supported the change with 53% strongly agreeing.

Findings from the National Drug Strategy Household Survey, 2019 show that the majority of Australian's aged 14 years and over support raising the legal age for sale or supply of tobacco products from 18 to 21 years or over.⁶

Following consultations with ATDC members and stakeholders, we can confirm that there is broad support for the amendments outlined in the proposed Amendment Bill, particularly given the absence of the Tobacco Free Generation legislation which was unsuccessful in being supported by the Tasmanian government in 2016.

Other jurisdictions

Tobacco 21 legislation is already in place throughout the United States⁷ in 450 cities across 14 states including California, Washington and Hawaii, representing over 30% of the US population. Formal evaluations and modelling suggest that this US legislation should reduce the smoking rate by 12% and reduce smoking-related death by about 10%, which translates into 223,000 fewer premature deaths, 50,000 fewer deaths from lung cancer and 4.2 million fewer years of life lost. While the US has a much larger population than Australia and indeed Tasmania, these figures highlight the dramatic improvements that can be made by raising the smoking age to 21 years of age.



⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS) 2019 key findings and data tables. Canberra: AIHW, 2020. Available from: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/3564474e-f7ad-461c-b918-7f8de03d1294/aihw-phe-270-NDSHS-2019.pdf.aspx?inline=true>.

⁷ Marynak K, Mahoney M, Williams KS, Tynan MA, Reimels E, King BA. *State and Territorial Laws Prohibiting Sales of Tobacco Products to Persons Aged <21 Years*— United States, December 20, 2019. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2020;69:189–192. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6907a3>



Tasmania to take action

There is growing momentum around the country on the issue of raising the age of smoking, and the ATDC calls on Members of the Tasmanian Parliament to look at the current tobacco related statistics for Tasmania and take this simple but effective step to save lives.

Knowing that there are approximately 70,500 smokers in Tasmania, and two in three of them will die from this habit, we need to respond. The ATDC applauds the Tasmanian Government for identifying smoking as one of five priority areas for action in the Healthy Tasmania Five Year Strategic Plan – so now, we need to take action.

Tasmania is not a community which shies away from taking the lead in these matters. We were the first state or territory in Australia to ban smoking in all indoor areas of bars, pubs and clubs in 2006, so the acceptance of these proposed amendments would not be the first time that Tasmania has taken the lead in tobacco control legislation.

Similarly, in 1997 the age at which tobacco could be sold to minors was raised from 16 to 18 years of age in Tasmania, virtually overnight. There was no phase-in period and young people who had bought cigarettes one day were not permitted to the next day. In comparison, the current proposed amendments, have a phase-in period, so there is no sudden effect on adolescent smokers attempting to purchase smoking products. Each year from its implementation the age at which tobacco products can be sold is raised until the final year at age 21.

The proposed amendments ensure that the onus of selling tobacco products is on the seller, not the purchaser. Young people who attempt to buy these products are not penalised. Intending purchasers will be obliged to provide age identification if requested by the seller.

The ATDC supports the introduction of the *Public Health Amendment (Prevention of sale of smoking products to underage persons) Bill 2018*. In providing this support, the ATDC acknowledges that this change will not be the sole remedy for Tasmania's above-average smoking rates and any initiative must be implemented alongside a suite of evidence-based measures and initiatives, particularly targeting Tasmanians most at risk.

We also echo the words of our member, Cancer Council Tasmania who ask that in supporting this Amendment Bill we should not lose sight of proven tobacco control measures such as hard-hitting social marketing campaigns, tax excise, smoke-free spaces and quit smoking support.