



Alcohol, Tobacco and other  
Drugs Council Tasmania Inc.

16 November 2018

Dear Members of the Tasmanian Legislative Council,

The ATDC is aware that the Honourable Ivan Dean MLC, has tabled the *Public Health Amendment (Prevention of sale of smoking products to underage persons) Bill 2018*.

To assist in the Council's deliberations, the ATDC provides the following information for consideration.

Tasmania has the second highest smoking rates in Australia and this is not acceptable to the ATDC or our members.

The World Health Organisation reports that 50 per cent of people who smoke will die as a result of their smoking, and we are aware that this figure is considered to be as high as two in three in Australia. The ATDC supports any initiatives that seeks to reduce these statistics.

Following consultation with our members and stakeholders, we can confirm that there is broad support for the amendments outlined in the Bill. In particular, from a number there is support for these amendments in the absence of the Tobacco Free Generation legislation, which was unsuccessful in being supported by the Tasmanian Government in 2016.

The ATDC is conscious that there may be two key considerations to the acceptance of a Bill such as this.

First, we suspect there will be concerns regarding a potential lack of community support to raise the age of smoking in comparison to other regulated activities such as purchasing alcohol and voting. The ATDC believes that due to the widespread acceptance of the burden of disease and harm that tobacco generates, that there will likely be less opposition to the introduction of amendments of this nature. This is supported through the research undertaken by Cancer Council Tasmania in 2016, which indicated strong community support for raising the minimum age of smoking to 21. Their research reported that 72 per cent of the Tasmanians surveyed (1,001 individuals) supported the change, with 53 per cent strongly agreeing.

Second, we suspect there may be concerns regarding a lack of an evidence-base to support the effectiveness of this approach. The ATDC has consulted with QUIT Tasmania, who have informed us that this approach has been implemented in a number of jurisdictions internationally, particularly in the US. While the full impact of raising the minimum age is yet to be quantified in these jurisdictions, this should not deter the Tasmanian Government from considering the adoption of tobacco control initiatives such as this. There are approximately 70,000 smokers in Tasmania, and armed with the knowledge that two in three of these individuals will die from this habit, we need to respond. We're not a community that 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 pubs, bars and clubs in 2006, so the acceptance of these amendments would not be the first time that Tasmania has taken the lead in tobacco control legislation.

In providing support for the Bill, the ATDC does so with the request that it not be implemented in isolation but within a suite of evidence-based measures, particularly targeting Tasmanians most at risk. The ATDC would be happy to provide further comment on which Tasmanians should be targeted, which would include members of our community who are receiving alcohol, and other drug treatment, leaving prison, from low socio-economic groups, and those living in regional, rural or remote regions.

We thank you for taking the time to consider this information.

If the ATDC can be of any other assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me directly on 0450 517 017.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alison Lai". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alison Lai  
Chief Executive Officer