

Draft

SECOND READING SPEECH

Public Health Amendment (Prohibited Tobacco and Other Products) Bill 2026

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Madam Speaker

I move that the Bill now be read a second time.

The Public Health Amendment (Prohibited Tobacco and Other Products) Bill 2026 (the Bill) delivers important and strong actions to address gaps in Tasmania's regulatory framework for reducing the use of illicit tobacco, vaping and other products.

These products pose a growing challenge for public health and for the integrity of Tasmania's regulatory system.

Illicit tobacco and vaping products undermine Tasmania's efforts to protect the health of the community, expose consumers to unregulated products, and increasingly target our children and young people.

They also disadvantage legitimate retailers who comply with the law and place frontline enforcement officers in harm's way while carrying out their duties. These officers show up every day to protect the community and deserve to be able to carry out their duties safely.

Madam Speaker, Tasmania has made substantial progress over many years in reducing smoking rates and tobacco-related harms.

However, the rapid emergence of illicit vaping products, other unregulated nicotine products and the growth of the illicit market for tobacco products have created new risks, particularly for young people.

The reforms contained in this Bill are designed to ensure Tasmania's laws remain effective in responding to these emerging challenges and continue to protect the health and wellbeing of the Tasmanian community.

In its current form, the *Public Health Act 1997* predates the recent emergence of new nicotine products and the growth of the illicit market, and requires updating to address these challenges.

The Bill therefore makes several key amendments to the *Public Health Act 1997*.

First, the Bill introduces stronger enforcement powers to more effectively address the sale, supply and possession of illicit tobacco and vaping products.

This includes the creation of a new offence for the sale or supply of illicit vaping products, and significantly increased penalties for the sale and supply of illicit tobacco and vaping products.

These stronger penalties reflect the serious public health risks posed by these products and send a clear message that unlawful trading in these products will not be tolerated.

Secondly, the Bill introduces stronger enforcement powers to support compliance with Tasmania's smoking product laws.

The Bill introduces new powers to close businesses that sell illicit products or that operate outside of the licensing framework.

These measures will support enforcement agencies to take timely action where unlawful activity is occurring and help ensure the regulatory system operates effectively.

Thirdly, the Bill introduces additional restrictions designed to reduce the visibility and accessibility of smoking products.

The Bill prohibits the sale and supply of smoking products from vending machines and bans the display of smoking paraphernalia in retail stores.

These measures are intended to reduce the visibility and normalisation of smoking products by ensuring they are kept out of view of consumers, particularly children and young people.

The Bill also strengthens enforcement provisions relating to the obstruction of nominated officers and the sale of smoking products to children and young people.

These amendments ensure that enforcement officers have the necessary powers to carry out their duties effectively and help maintain strong protections for our young Tasmanians.

The reforms contained in this Bill represent the first stage of a broader program of legislative reform.

The second stage, to be completed by the end of 2027, will see smoking, vaping, and nicotine laws consolidated under a standalone Act for Tasmania.

This staged approach strengthens tobacco and vaping laws and ensures Tasmania remains aligned with other jurisdictions in regulating smoking and e-cigarette products.

Strong regulatory frameworks are an essential part of reducing tobacco and nicotine harms, and are recognised internationally as among the most effective population health measures.

They complement our existing and ongoing initiatives to help people who use tobacco or e-cigarettes to quit, whilst continuing to encourage young people to remain smoke free and vape free.

Madam Speaker, these reforms will further protect the health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians and help keep children and young people safe from the harms associated with smoking and nicotine products.

They will also protect legitimate businesses and frontline enforcement staff, and future-proof our laws against new and emerging smoking and nicotine products.

We have made good progress in recent years to reduce smoking rates and tobacco related harms in Tasmania.

Sustained action and the involvement of all of us – government, business, communities, health professionals, and individuals – is needed to ensure this progress continues.

I acknowledge the support for this Bill from key stakeholders, including the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, the Department of Treasury and Finance, and Quit Tasmania.

I look forward to working together to improve and protect the health of Tasmanians into the future.

I commend the Bill to the House.