



Inquiry into annual and financial reports 2024–2025

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Mr Thomas Emerson MLA

Addressed to: Minister for Health

Reference: HCSD - ACT Health Annual Report 2024-25; Canberra Health Services Annual Report 2024-25

Hearing: 11 November 2025

In relation to: Illicit tobacco trade

Question received: 19 November 2025

Answer Due: 26 November 2025

1. In addition to the legislative changes that have recently been introduced to crack down on illicit tobacco trade, what else is the Government doing to reduce tobacco harm in our community.
2. Other jurisdictions have taken much stronger action to crack down on the illicit tobacco trade, including significantly larger fines, substantial jail time, and making it easier for landlords to end the leases of retailers caught selling illegal tobacco products. Why has the ACT Government chosen not to pursue this path and is the Government considering any further compliance and enforcement options.
3. What funding is the Government allocating to resource the inspectors that will be required to enforce the proposed new legislative measures.
4. Noting the massive success of the National Tobacco Campaign in the late 90s and early 20s in reducing smoking rates, is the Government considering a renewed ACT-led public health campaign that is more fit-for-purpose in the modern era to target young people and the prevalence of illicit tobacco and smoking products like vapes.

RACHEL STEPHEN-SMITH MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. In line with several priority areas under the *National Tobacco Strategy 2023-2030*, the ACT Government is progressing key actions to reduce tobacco harm in our community. Through a Federation Funding Agreement with the Commonwealth Government, the ACT will receive a total of \$1.065 million over four years to scale up Quitline and cessation services.

Funding has been allocated towards:

- a) Recommissioning the ACT Quitline in 2024-25 to improve its capability, including the addition of digital support options. The new service provider, Cancer Council Victoria, was awarded a grant of \$221,443 (GST exclusive) per annum for an initial period of three years and commenced service delivery on 1 July 2025.
 - b) Commissioning a pilot program for a drop-in youth-targeted vaping cessation support services in the ACT, including provision of free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) to young people (where clinically appropriate). The Junction Youth Health Service, operated by Anglicare NSW and ACT, will be provided with up to \$660,000 (GST exclusive) for a maximum period of three years to operate this service, expected to commence by the end of 2025.
2. The ACT has not experienced the same level of organised criminal activity associated with tobacco sales as other jurisdictions, such as targeted arson or related violent incidents, which necessitate the introduction of comparable enforcement measures.

However, the ACT Government recognises the serious nature of illicit tobacco crime and is committed to introducing further reforms that reflect this risk. The Government is closely monitoring the range of regulatory and non-regulatory approaches of other jurisdictions and their impact on the illicit tobacco trade and the broader community.

Further legislative reforms will be progressed in 2026 and will be informed by emerging evidence and best practice approaches to ensure compliance and enforcement measures remain effective and proportionate.

3. On 12 March 2025, the Australian Government announced a \$156.7 million national package to combat illicit tobacco, which includes a \$40 million pool to support states and territories in strengthening local compliance and enforcement capability. The ACT Government welcomes this commitment and is actively engaging with the Australian Government on funding allocations to ensure effective implementation and execution of both current and proposed measures.
4. The National Tobacco Campaign expanded in 2024 to include the risks and harms of vaping, targeting both adults and young people. The ACT Government has utilised the momentum of the national campaign to ignite a local community conversation addressing illicit tobacco use and vaping among young people, with a focus on prevention and cessation. Using messaging aligned with the national campaign, the ACT Government is raising awareness of the harms of smoking and vaping and the support services available to help young people quit.

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In early 2024, more than \$2 million was allocated across four community organisations to deliver six programs targeted at harm reduction for young people, including four initiatives focused on nicotine harm reduction and vaping cessation. Further information on the projects supported by this funding round is available here:

https://www.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/2446426/Healthy-Canberra-Grants-Focus-on-Vaping-Cessation-and-Reducing-Alcohol-Related-Harm-Summaries.pdf.

The ACT Government continues to promote support services and resources available to Canberrans – including the ACT Quitline and eLearning modules for teachers – across various communication channels, including digital and out-of-home. The outcomes of the latest iteration of the national campaign and upcoming campaign developments will continue to inform future work in this space across the ACT.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature:



Date:

30/11/25

By the Minister for Health, Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA