

**HEALTH, COMMUNITIES, DISABILITY SERVICES AND DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE
PREVENTION COMMITTEE**

Report No. 19

Inquiry into tobacco licensing arrangements in Queensland

QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

INTRODUCTION

On 28 October 2015, the Legislative Assembly referred an inquiry into tobacco licensing arrangements in Queensland to the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic Violence Prevention Committee.

The Committee tabled its report on 29 April 2016 with one recommendation.

The Committee noted that national and state policy and legislative tobacco reform has seen significant reductions in smoking rates. However, tobacco related illnesses and deaths continue to have a significant impact on the Queensland community.

The Committee found that there is a strong public health case for the implementation of a positive licensing scheme, for both wholesalers and retailers in Queensland.

The report acknowledged that an advantage of introducing a positive retail licensing scheme would be the ability to obtain accurate information on the number, location and type of tobacco retail outlets. For wholesale licensing the ability to obtain accurate information on the volume of tobacco product sales was identified as an advantage. These factors were seen as likely to assist with education and enforcement efforts.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATION:

Recommendation

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services consider implementing a positive wholesale and retail tobacco licensing scheme in Queensland, giving weight to appropriate licensing fees and avoiding unnecessary regulatory red tape for small businesses.

Queensland Government response:

The Queensland Government accepts the Committee's recommendation.

The Queensland Government:

- acknowledges the importance of implementing a multi-strategy approach to further protect the health of non-smokers and reduce smoking prevalence;
- notes that while the Committee found that there was support from a variety of stakeholders for the adoption of a licensing scheme, opinion differed on the type of scheme that should be introduced; and

- notes the need to undertake a considered approach in the design of the scheme to minimise unintended consequences particularly in relation to impact on competition and establishment of licensing fees.

The Queensland Government, through the Department of Health, will consult with stakeholders, including tobacco wholesalers and retailers, over a four month period commencing 15 August 2016 to inform a comprehensive assessment of the potential impacts and benefits a tobacco licensing scheme.

Key policy topics for the consultation will include, for example:

- overall type, scope and purpose of the scheme;
- national competition policy requirements;
- potential for revenue from a licensing scheme to strengthen and expand enforcement resources;
- differential fee structures;
- public availability of data captured under any licensing scheme;
- eligibility criteria for suitable persons for selling smoking products; and
- potential of a licensing scheme to further reduce smoking rates by limiting supply.

Key operational issues for the consultation will include, for example:

- capacity of scheme to be dynamic and incorporate new tobacco laws;
- integration with existing enforcement systems;
- renewal timeframes; and
- opportunities to streamline application processes, and reduce red tape, by using an online interface.

Informed by the consultation with Queensland businesses and industry peaks, it is anticipated that the Government will consider detailed policy proposals concerning a tobacco retail and wholesale licensing scheme.