



Petition

Registration No.	2
Title	Amend <i>Tobacco Act 2002</i> to make it illegal for people under the age of 18 to be in possession of tobacco products
Presented on	23 February 2021
Presented by	Member for Goyder
Referred to	Minister Fyles and Public Accounts Committee
Assembly debate	If the Committee recommends the Petition be debated it will appear on the Notice Paper
Date referred	23 February 2021
Response due	25 June 2021
Response received	31 March 2021
Response presented	4 May 2021

Petition

TO THE HONOURABLE THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Petition Title: Amendment to the Tobacco Act of 2002.

Reasons:

This petition draws to the attention of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly our concern with the Tobacco Act of 2002. Currently under this law, law enforcement do not have the power to confiscate (or destroy) tobacco products from a person (under the age of 18) in possession of them (apart from in public places). This law does NOT protect the health of those under the age of 18. Each year 15 000 Australians die of cancer caused by smoking. The younger a person starts smoking, the more damage it does to their body. It is devastating that nearly 9/10 smokers start smoking before the age of 18.

Request:

We therefore ask the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly to:

Amend the Tobacco Act of 2002 to make it illegal for people under the age of 18 to be in possession of tobacco products. This amendment will give law enforcement the power to confiscate and destroy tobacco products found in possession of an under 18 person.

Response

The Tobacco Control Act 2002 (the Act) together with the Northern Territory Tobacco Action Plan 2019 – 2023 (the Action Plan) aim to reduce the harm to people's health from the consumption of tobacco and other smoking products by discouraging people from smoking, reducing people's exposure to environmental tobacco smoke and by supporting people to stop smoking. The Northern Territory Department of Health is committed to providing increased awareness about the harmful effects of tobacco smoking, providing targeted support for people to quit, greater access to clinical interventions, and implementation and monitoring of smoke-free workplace policy and legislative support across the Northern Territory.

Evidence-based best practices for tobacco control underpins both legislation and strategies contained in the Action Plan. The Action Plan also identifies children and young people as a priority population with key activity to incorporate effective interventions for children and teenagers who smoke. The Action Plan and legislation primarily support education, and broad punitive measures for the use and possession of tobacco are not used to promote quitting or reduce uptake.

There are limited studies on prohibition of tobacco possession for minors and no compelling evidence that supports penalising youth for the possession, use, or purchase of tobacco products is effective. The Act provides for severe penalties for Licensees of Tobacco Retail Outlets should they sell tobacco products to people under the age of 18 years.

The Northern Territory Government looks forward to working with the community to reduce tobacco consumption; discourage use of tobacco alternatives such as electronic cigarettes; reducing public exposure to environmental tobacco smoke and by supporting people with their efforts to quit smoking.