

Secretary,
Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee
GPO Box 3721
Darwin NT 0801

4 September 2018

Dear Ms Buckley

Re: Tobacco Control Legislation Amendment Bill 2018

Thank you for the invitation to make a submission to the Committee about this important legislation.

The NT continues to have the highest Indigenous and non-Indigenous smoking prevalence in Australia. Smoking was estimated to cause 169 extra deaths and cost the NT \$764 million in 2005/6.¹ Smoking is an important cause of the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Territorians, causing 21% of the gap for men and 14% for women.²

Menzies continues to conduct rigorous research to inform NT and national tobacco control policy and practice, with a particular focus on Indigenous tobacco control research.

Menzies supports the passing of the Tobacco Control Legislation Amendment Bill 2018

Research evidence about e-cigarettes is still emerging. Even though it seems likely e-cigarettes may be less harmful than cigarettes, which are uniquely deadly among legal products as they cause the early death of about 2/3 of regular users, we know little about their long-term health effects. While about 1/3 of Australian smokers have ever used an e-cigarette, very few people who have never smoked cigarettes have used them.³ It is not yet clear whether e-cigarettes will lead to more children and non-smokers taking up smoking or help smokers to quit, as some research has claimed. With this uncertainty, it is reasonable that the proposed NT legislation treats e-cigarettes similarly to burnt cigarettes and vaping as smoking. Menzies does however acknowledge that the use of nicotine in e-liquids for vaping is banned by Commonwealth legislation.

Menzies also supports the extension of smoke-free areas to 10m from the entry or boundary. Secondhand smoke kills 600,000 people in the world every year. Menzies commends this added protection for non-smokers, including children.

Menzies supports other changes which will also protect children from access to cigarettes. We are pleased cigarette vending machines will now only be in areas which are children free. Similarly, it is not reasonable to ask a child to enforce the

current ban on cigarette sales to minors, so we support the ban on children selling cigarettes.

Menzies does question the continued capacity of schools to establish a smoking area on school grounds. Children at schools should be protected from secondhand smoke and from school staff, who continue to smoke, normalising smoking. Menzies has supported work by previous NT Governments to make hospitals and prisons smoke-free, and to protect kids in cars from secondhand smoke.

Menzies also hopes that these legislative changes will be followed by greater NT Government investment in evidence-based tobacco control activities, such as high reach TV campaigns.

Sincerely,



Prof Alan Cass
Director

References

1. South Australian Centre for Economic Studies. *Harms from and costs of tobacco consumption in the Northern Territory*. Adelaide: SACES;2012.
2. Zhao Y, Guthridge S, Magnus A, Vos T. Burden of disease and injury in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations in the Northern Territory. *Med J Aust*. May 17 2004;180(10):498-502.
3. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. *National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2016: detailed findings*. *Drug Statistics Series no. 31. Cat. No. PHE 214*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare; 2017.