

Policy options to protect and improve low smoking rates, particularly in priority populations

Population smoking rates in Australia have reduced significantly since the 1970s because of consistent and comprehensive government interventions in tobacco control. However, smoking remains the single leading cause of preventable death and disease in Australia and a significant contributor to preventable healthcare costs.

Priority populations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with mental health conditions, people identifying as LGBTQ+ and people in rural and regional communities, make up a disproportionate amount of the remaining daily smokers.

CHALLENGES TO IMPROVE TOBACCO CESSATION RATES INCLUDE:



Help to quit needs to be more proactively offered to smokers



Product engineering misleads consumers into believing filters reduce harms



Increasing e-cigarette use may reverse long-term reduction in youth smoking rates

BARRIERS TO QUITTING FACED BY SMOKERS IN PRIORITY POPULATIONS INCLUDE:

- widespread acceptability of smoking in low-income areas
- common reliance on smoking to help manage mental health conditions
- increased density of cigarette supply outlets in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage
- impacts of discrimination and trauma that significantly contributing to smoking behaviours

PUBLIC POLICY OPTIONS: TO PROTECT AND IMPROVE LOW SMOKING RATES, BASED ON THE BEST AVAILABLE EVIDENCE



- New investment in **mass media campaigns** ensuring that they:
 - are inclusive of priority populations and reflective of the unique challenges
 - emphasise product engineering impacts such as the harms of filters and e-cigarettes.



- Investment in **optimising all interactions between smokers and healthcare**, both primary and specialist, to embed a health focus on smoking cessation and support. Provide **incentives and investments** for evidence-informed treatment approaches, including combined pharmacotherapies and behavioral intervention and for **training and support** of healthcare professionals.



- Establishment of a **national retail tobacco sales licensing scheme**.