

Tobacco Control News

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Tobacco Control in Australia — What's changing & Why it Matters



Hi TIS Teams!

There's been a lot happening in the world of tobacco control - and we're only halfway through the year!

Some big changes are coming to tobacco products in Australia from 1 July 2025. Tobacco products sold here will not only look different, but also taste different, feel different, be named differently, and only be sold in specific sizes and packaging. This means some tobacco products will no longer be available in local shops. These changes are designed to make smoking less appealing and help more people quit. You can learn more about these changes by checking out our new infographic on the TIS website [here](#).

These national changes are part of Australia's commitment to a landmark global public health agreement - the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). As part of this, the WHO introduced the MPOWER package, a set of six evidence-based strategies proven to reduce smoking rates and protect people from the harms of tobacco, which I've written about in more detail before. You can find that Research Round up [here](#).

Every two years, the WHO assesses how well countries are implementing these strategies. In 2018, Australia was among the top performers (alongside Brazil, Turkey, Ireland and New Zealand), scoring 33 out of 35. But in 2022, our score dropped to 29 points, highlighting the need for renewed action. In response, Australia is strengthening its tobacco control efforts - and you can read more about those actions [here](#).

What is MPOWER?

MPOWER is a package of six high impact, cost-effective tobacco control activities shown to reduce smoking prevalence. These population level activities are:

M = Monitor tobacco use and prevention policies

P = Protect people from tobacco smoke

O = Offer help to quit tobacco use

W = Warn about the dangers of tobacco

E = Enforce bans on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship

R = Raise taxes on tobacco



For this month's evidence update, I'm highlighting a global review by [Peruga et al. \(2021\)](#), which looks at the progress and challenges of global tobacco control policies since the launch of the WHO FCTC. While many countries - including Australia - have made significant progress in tobacco control, this review highlights how inconsistent policy implementation and ongoing interference from the tobacco industry continue to hinder further advancements. It serves as a timely reminder of the need for strong, sustained, and coordinated action to protect public health. You can read my in-depth review of this paper below.

Take Home Message for TIS Teams

TIS teams play a vital role in advancing Australia's tobacco control efforts. While global frameworks such as the WHO FCTC provide an important foundation, it is the local knowledge, trusted community relationships, and culturally safe health promotion delivered by TIS teams that give these policies real impact. Through strong partnerships, sharing stories, and promoting smoke- and vape-free environments, TIS teams help to strengthen the broader tobacco control system in Australia and ensure that efforts remain relevant, responsive, and community-led for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Reflections from the National TIS Worker's Workshop

A special shout-out to everyone who attended the National TIS Workers' Workshop last week on the beautiful lands of the Larrakia people in Garramilla (Darwin). The two-day gathering was a great opportunity to connect, share, and learn from each other. Witnessing the power, strength and heart of the TIS program - you, the TIS workforce - all in one room is a memory I'll carry with me for a long time.

I'm excited to share some of the incredible stories and activities happening across the country to tackle tobacco smoking and vaping - including the deadly dance choreography we learnt from Bush Fit Mob partners of Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation - with my family and friends near and far. For more information about the presentations and resources from the workshop, visit the TIS website or have a chat with your Program Officer.



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In depth Paper Review

Peruga, A., López, M. J., Martínez, C., & Fernández, E. (2021). Tobacco control policies in the 21st century: achievements and open challenges. *Molecular Oncology*, 15(3), 744-752. <https://doi.org/10.1002/1878-0261.12918>



This review looked at the progress of tobacco control policies in reducing smoking rates and tobacco-related deaths since the launch of the WHO FCTC in 2005. The aim of the review was to assess how effectively countries have implemented tobacco control measures and to identify ongoing challenges. The authors analysed global trends, policy adoption, and implementation outcomes over the past 20 years, using data from multiple countries.

Take Home Message

Tobacco control policies work - especially when they are fully implemented and enforced. Sustained action, global coordination, and protection from tobacco industry interference are essential to reducing the harms of tobacco use and achieving long-term progress in tobacco control.



Key Findings

- Global tobacco use has declined since the launch of the WHO FCTC in 2005.
- Over 90% of the world's population is now covered by the WHO FCTC.
- Around 5 billion people benefit from at least one of the MPOWER measures - significant increase since 2007.
- Smoke-free laws, strong health warnings, plain packaging, and tobacco taxes reduce smoking rates.
- Countries that fully implement and sustain WHO FCTC measures see the greatest reductions in tobacco use.
- Only a few countries, including Australia, have consistently run best-practice mass media campaigns since 2010.
- Australia was the first country to introduce plain packaging in 2012 and successfully defended it through legal challenges - a global example of protecting public health policy.
- Tobacco industry interference continues to delay or weaken tobacco control progress in many countries.
- Increasing smoke-free environments and promoting plain packaging with large visual health warnings for all tobacco products could accelerate progress in many countries.
- Increasing tobacco taxes is an underused but highly effective strategy to reduce tobacco smoking.

Further progress in tobacco control requires strong political leadership - including increasing tobacco taxes, banning additives that make tobacco products more appealing, and preventing tobacco companies from promoting themselves through community or charity activities. In Australia, many of these actions are already being addressed through recent legislation and policy reforms, demonstrating a national commitment to reducing tobacco-related harm and protecting people's health.

Study Limitations

- **Data limitations:** Not all countries had the same amount or quality of data, especially in low- and middle-income countries.
- **Variation in measures:** Countries used different definitions and methods to measure how tobacco policies were put in place, which may have affected the results
- **Differences in context:** The findings may have been influenced by broader social, economic, and political factors that were not explored in this review.

