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Dear Sir/Madam

### **Stroke Foundation's response to the Tasmanian Government's Public Health Amendment (Prohibited Tobacco and Other Products) Bill 2026**

I am writing on behalf of Stroke Foundation to express our support for the Tasmanian Government's Public Health Amendment (Prohibited Tobacco and Other Products) Bill 2026 (the Bill).

We commend the Tasmanian Government for these legislative reforms, which will be critical for reducing the availability and harms of illicit tobacco, vaping and other nicotine products.

### **About Stroke Foundation and the health impacts of tobacco, vaping and other nicotine products**

Stroke Foundation is a national charity that partners with the community to prevent stroke, save lives and enhance recovery. We do this through raising awareness, empowering health professionals to deliver high quality, best-practice care to stroke patients, facilitating research, and supporting survivors of stroke. We advocate for better systems, processes and resources to help health professionals deliver world class stroke care.

Tasmania has the highest per capita incidence of stroke nationally.<sup>1</sup> There are more than 11,000 survivors of stroke living in Tasmania,<sup>1</sup> many living with an ongoing disability, and national modelling suggests their number is growing.<sup>1</sup>

In Tasmania, for strokes that occurred in 2023, the economic impact on the state economy will be \$385 million over a lifetime, which equates to \$342,000 per person.<sup>1</sup> Of the \$385 million in lifetime costs, \$141 million of this was healthcare costs, including \$110 million in hospital costs and \$10 million in road ambulance costs.<sup>1</sup>

More than 80 percent of strokes can be prevented through addressing key modifiable risk factors, including smoking.<sup>2</sup> Tasmania has the second highest rate of daily smokers in Australia at 11.3 percent, compared with 8.3 percent nationally,<sup>3</sup> and tobacco smoking is Tasmania's single most preventable risk factor for poor health outcomes.

People who smoke tobacco cigarettes are twice as likely to have a stroke compared with those who have never smoked.<sup>4-7</sup> The more an individual smokes the greater their risk of stroke.<sup>5</sup>

Importantly, an individual's risk of stroke decreases after they quit smoking, and stopping smoking has been shown to have both immediate and long-term health benefits.<sup>8</sup> Two to five years after quitting, there is a large drop in an individual's risk of stroke,<sup>8</sup> and after 15 years their risk of stroke is similar to that of a person who has never smoked.<sup>8</sup> As such, Stroke Foundation is strongly supportive of measures to reduce the prevalence of smoking in the Tasmanian community.

There are also concerns about the harms caused by vaping products, including e-cigarettes, that have emerged in recent years. Research commissioned by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) has identified conclusive evidence that use of e-cigarettes can cause serious harms in some users (acute respiratory diseases, burns and injuries, seizures, and poisoning due to exposure to e-liquids that contain nicotine), which in some cases can result in death.<sup>9, 10</sup> Currently, there is a lack of evidence on the potential impact of e-cigarette use on the risk of cardiovascular disease, including stroke, and more research is needed to determine the long-term consequences of these products.

## **The Public Health Amendment (Prohibited Tobacco and Other Products) Bill 2026**

The highly successful approach to tobacco control by Australian governments (comprised of public health policy initiatives including health promotion, increased taxation on tobacco products, and tobacco advertising and plain packaging legislation) has had a significant impact on the prevalence of smoking over the last three decades. It is likely that the fall in the prevalence of smoking in the Australian community over the last 30 years, resulting from the Australian Government's tobacco control initiatives, has contributed to the observed reduction in the rate of stroke events over the same period.<sup>11</sup>

The illicit tobacco and other nicotine product market, which has been growing in recent years,<sup>12</sup> perpetuates the use of these products, and Stroke Foundation is concerned that this may erode the significant gains that have been made over the last 30 years in reducing smoking rates and exposure to tobacco smoke, particularly among younger Australians. This illicit market also has a number of other serious consequences, including unique health risks (in addition to the well-established negative health impacts of tobacco), significant losses in tax revenue and the funding of organised crime.<sup>12</sup>

The increased prosecution of retailers selling illicit products, and introduction of meaningful penalties to discourage the involvement of retailers and criminal syndicates in the sale of these products, are examples of policy measures that could address this growing market in Australia.<sup>12</sup> *Therefore, Stroke Foundation welcomes the legislative reforms in this Bill, aimed at cracking down on retailers that fail to comply with the law, reducing the availability of commercial premises for the illegal market and the profitability of this market, and strengthening enforcement.*

The tobacco and vape industry has deliberately marketed vaping products to young people, and vaping rates in Australia have increased significantly over recent years, particularly among children and young people.<sup>13</sup> *Therefore, Stroke Foundation welcomes the legislative reforms in this Bill, aimed at banning the display of smoking paraphernalia in retail stores to ensure products are not visible to children and young people, and improving enforcement responses for offences relating to the sale of smoking products to underaged people.*

While Stroke Foundation is supportive of the proposed reforms, we recommend that the Tasmanian Government strengthen the proposed amendments to:

- align penalties with leading Australian jurisdictions
- ensure nicotine pouches and any future products are covered
- remove the restriction on short-term closure orders per calendar year.

It is also critical that revenue collected from enforcement is transparently reinvested into:

- targeted public health and culturally safe cessation programs for priority populations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and rural and remote Tasmanians
- expanding the availability of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) statewide at no cost to the user when provided with structured support from a Quitline service
- providing targeted training for general practitioners and pharmacists to deliver brief interventions and evidence-based cessation support
- delivering targeted smoking and e-cigarette education campaigns and interventions focused on both prevention and cessation, tailored to schools, young adults, and the general population.

## Other considerations

### *Maintain the federal tobacco excise*

Tobacco taxation is the single most effective intervention for reducing tobacco consumption, with modelling suggesting that a 10 percent increase in price results in a 4 to 5 percent reduction in consumption.<sup>14</sup> Further, international evidence shows that reducing tobacco taxes is both ineffective and counterproductive. For example, in Canada, where the tobacco excise was halved during the 1990s in an attempt to address the illicit tobacco market, smoking rates increased, particularly among young people, while cessation rates declined. Stroke Foundation urges the Tasmanian Government to continue to support, and advocate for, the federal tobacco excise, through Health Ministers Meeting (HMM) processes and federal forums.

### *Prevent tobacco industry interference*

Australia is a signatory to the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). Our obligation under Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC is to protect the setting and implementation of tobacco control policies from interference from the tobacco industry and its interests. As the Tasmanian Government strengthens its enforcement against illicit tobacco and other nicotine products, it is critical it remains vigilant against increased lobbying by the tobacco industry and its affiliated or proxy organisations. Stroke Foundation strongly supports the protection of public health policies and strategies, and preventive health actions, from real, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest, through a variety of measures, including transparent stakeholder engagement processes, limiting tobacco industry engagement in policy development and implementation, and banning political donations from the tobacco industry.

## Summary

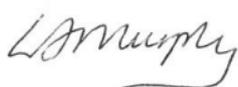
We commend the Tasmanian Government for this Bill, which represents an important step forward in the state's leadership in tobacco control, and will be critical for reducing the availability and harms of illicit tobacco, vaping and other nicotine products. Stroke Foundation strongly supports these legislative reforms, which will help to ensure the significant gains that have been made in tobacco control in Tasmania over the last few decades are not lost.

The recommendations in this submission align with established state and national policy priorities, including the *Tasmanian Tobacco Action Plan 2022-26*, *National Tobacco Strategy 2023-2030*, and *National Preventive Health Strategy 2021-2030*. They also support the strategic goals of *Tasmania's 20-Year Preventive Health Strategy*, which is currently in development. In order to ensure a sustained and dedicated focus on tobacco as a leading risk factor for disease burden, and support the operationalisation of this Bill, we encourage the Tasmanian Government to maintain the *Tasmanian Tobacco Action Plan* as a standalone strategy that complements, but operates independently, of the *20-Year Preventive Health Strategy* and its 4-year action plans.

In addition to the supply-side measures included in the Bill, we urge the Tasmanian Government to continue to invest in and support complementary public health measures focused on nicotine demand reduction, including maintaining the federal tobacco excise.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Bill.

Yours sincerely



**Dr Lisa Murphy**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Stroke Foundation**

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