

Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MGA Welcomes Victoria's New Powers to Shut Down Illicit Tobacco Shops

Master Grocers Australia (MGA) welcomes the Victorian Government's announcement of new powers to shut down premises linked to illicit tobacco, saying the crackdown is needed to break a dangerous organised crime market operating in plain sight across Victoria.

MGA CEO Martin Stirling said the reforms were an essential tool to disrupt rampant illicit trade harming legitimate retailers and communities while undermining the rule of law.

"Illegal tobacco should have no place in a functioning society. Those selling it are not just breaking tax laws - they are ignoring rules designed to protect children and public health," Mr Stirling said.

"Independent retailers follow the law and comply with strict tobacco regulations, yet they are being undercut by illegal operators selling unregulated products at prices legitimate businesses simply cannot compete with."

Mr Stirling said the new store closure powers send a strong signal that illegal operators will no longer be tolerated and the days of easy and illegal tax-free profits are hopefully coming to an end in Victoria.

"MGA has consistently called for stronger enforcement powers to tackle illicit tobacco, so we welcome this important step to give authorities the tools they need to shut down illegal operators. We call on the Victorian Government to ensure Victoria's laws are passed and implemented urgently, as we have seen in other states."

Mr Stirling said the reforms are a positive step but emphasised the importance of ensuring the new laws are rigorously enforced by well-resourced agencies that coordinate action with other state and federal agencies.

"This issue has escalated into a significant public safety concern. Across Australia, we have seen criminal gangs fighting for control of the illicit tobacco market, with incidents of violence, arson and extortion linked to the trade," Mr Stirling said.

"Retailers and their staff should never feel unsafe when running a legitimate business and coming to work."

MGA said continued enforcement, intelligence sharing and strong penalties will be essential to ensure organised criminal networks cannot profit from illegal tobacco.

"Legitimate small businesses should not be the ones paying the price for organised criminal activity," Mr Stirling said.

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About MGAIBA

MGA Independent Businesses Australia (MGA) is the national peak industry body representing independent grocery and liquor retailers across Australia. Since 1898, MGA has advocated for family-owned retail businesses and supports members with workplace relations, legal, and industry policy advice. For more information, please visit www.mgaiba.org.au