

Shisha tobacco reforms

Factsheet for the community

This fact sheet is a summary of the Victorian tobacco control laws that apply to the sale, advertising and use of shisha tobacco.

Shisha tobacco

Shisha tobacco is usually a combination of tobacco fermented in molasses and flavoured with fruit flavours. Generally, shisha tobacco has a distinct sweet and fruit-flavoured aroma and is smoked through a waterpipe.

Common names for shisha tobacco include waterpipe tobacco, molasses tobacco, nargile, hookah, argihle, goza and hubble bubble.

Changes to the laws

Under the *Tobacco Act 1987* (the Tobacco Act), the sale, advertising and use of shisha tobacco that contains **any amount** of tobacco will be treated the same as other tobacco products, such as cigarettes and cigars from **1 August 2017**.

The changes mean that shisha tobacco cannot be:

- used in places where smoking is banned
- sold to a person under 18 years of age
- displayed or advertised at point of sale
- sold from a temporary outlet, such as a vehicle
- given away, or offered for free, to promote the sale of a shisha or molasses tobacco product.

The changes also align with Commonwealth tobacco plain packaging laws, which require shisha tobacco products to be packaged in mandatory plain packaging with graphic health warning images.

Fruit or herbal-based products that do not contain tobacco are not subject to these laws.

Places where the smoking of shisha tobacco is prohibited

The smoking of shisha tobacco is banned in all areas where smoking is banned under the Tobacco Act.

This includes enclosed workplaces such as cafes, lounges and licensed premises.

From 1 August 2017, smoking bans are extended to:

- outdoor dining areas
- outdoor drinking areas if any part is within 4 metres of an outdoor dining area, unless separated by a wall that is at least 2.1 metres high.

Reason for the changes

Since 2006, smoking has been prohibited inside enclosed workplaces in Victoria. This ban applies to shisha tobacco where tobacco is the **main** ingredient.

Recent changes have extended the laws around shisha tobacco to protect community health and reduce tobacco-related disease and illness.

The new laws aim to:

- protect staff and customers from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke exposure inside enclosed workplaces, such as shisha cafes and lounges
- prevent people under 18 years of age purchasing and accessing shisha tobacco
- prevent shisha tobacco smoking and uptake, particularly among children and young people who may be attracted to this form of smoking
- support those trying to quit smoking, or those who have recently quit
- provide consistency with the way other tobacco products are regulated.

Health risks

There is strong evidence that shisha tobacco smoking and exposure to its smoke poses harmful health risks.

Shisha tobacco users and those exposed to second-hand smoke are at risk of many of the same type of diseases and illness caused by cigarette smoking including lung cancer, respiratory illness and low birth weight during pregnancy.

There is a common misunderstanding that shisha tobacco use is a safer option to cigarette smoking.

This is incorrect.

Shisha tobacco smokers can be exposed to similar or higher levels of harmful chemicals compared with cigarette smoking.

According to the World Health Organization, a shisha tobacco smoking session may involve inhaling smoke that is equal to smoking 100 cigarettes.¹

Penalties

The penalties are the same as other tobacco products such as cigarettes and cigars.

For example, a person smoking shisha tobacco in a smoke-free area such as an enclosed workplace or outdoor dining area may receive a fine of one penalty unit.²

Further information

For more information:

- call the Tobacco Information Line on 1300 136 775
- visit the [tobacco reforms website](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/tobaccoreforms) <www.health.vic.gov.au/tobaccoreforms>.

To view the exact wording of the law from 1 August 2017, visit the Victorian Government's [legislation website](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au) <www.legislation.vic.gov.au> and search *Tobacco Act 1987*.

To receive this publication in an accessible format phone the Tobacco Information Line on 1300 136 775 using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email tobaccopolicy@health.vic.gov.au

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Available at

www.health.vic.gov.au/tobaccoreforms

¹ World Health Organization 2005, *Waterpipe tobacco smoking: health effects, research needs and recommended actions by regulators*, World Health Organization, Geneva

² Penalty units are indexed each year. One penalty unit in 2017–18 is \$158.57.

