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**Tasmania's Legislative Council says no to inquiry on raising the smoking age**

A move to send a bill that would increase the smoking age in Tasmania to 21 years to a committee has failed to win support from the Legislative Council.

The vote has followed recent strong lobbying from anti-smoking campaigners and business groups either for or opposed to changing the smoking age.

Windermere independent MLC Ivan Dean said no threats had been made to Legislative Council members and nobody had told him they had felt bullied or intimidated over the course of discussions.

He said there was reams of information and opinions from both sides of the debate which needed to be thrashed out and tested under oath before a committee.

Mr Dean said he failed to see how a limited number of people outlawed from buying cigarettes would impact Tasmanian businesses.

He said he would ask the government to undertake a regulatory impact assessment to counter the "hype and hysteria" from the bill's opponents.

Mr Dean said there was no evidence from jurisdictions with a smoking age of 21 years that a higher age restriction could cause a black market to develop.

Rumney Labor MLC Sarah Lovell said the party did not support the motion.

She said she believed work on the bill should be done by the Menzies Institute of Medical Research and not a Legislative Council committee.

Leader of Government Business in the Legislative Council, Leonie Hiscutt, said the government supported the motion.

"As is well known, Tasmania remains above the national average for smoking rates," she said.

McIntyre independent MLC Tania Rattray said an inquiry was unnecessary since members had already received a myriad of information on the bill.

Murchison independent MLC Ruth Forrest said it was unknown how the bill would lower smoking rates in high-risk groups.

She called upon the government to run an anti-smoking campaign that targeted young people.

Mr Dean said he planned to bring forward the bill to raise the smoking age in Tasmania in the middle of next year.

Tasmanian Small Business Council chief executive Robert Mallett said the bill needed to be brought on for debate as soon as possible to remove uncertainty from the retail sector.