

## From 'chop chop' tobacco to black market smokes for just \$10: The cigarette 'hacks' Australia's smoker are using to avoid paying the world's highest prices

- Australians are using several tobacco hacks to get around rising cigarette prices
- The methods range from 'chop chop' to small shops selling black market smokes
- Despite paying the highest cigarette prices in the world Australians still smoking
- A new round of tobacco excise hikes means the price of a packet is set to hit \$40
- Australian Border Force has made 52,000 detections of illegal tobacco this year

By Sam Duncan For Daily Mail Australia | Published: 03:07 BST, 5 June 2018

Cigarette prices are approaching \$40 a packet in Australia, but the country's smokers are using finding clever ways to buy cheap tobacco instead of giving up.

From using 'chop chop' tobacco to buying black market cigarettes sold under the counter, more and more smokers are refusing to pay full price.

Australians have become so adept at finding cheap cigarettes the rate of smoking cessation has slowed to a crawl, lagging behind world leaders.

With the latest round of tobacco excise hikes set to bring prices up to \$40 a packet within the next year, there is no respite in sight for cash-strapped smokers.

Rather than pay the extra \$3 a packet, many Australians are buying 'chop chop' - illegal loose-leaf tobacco, which is often home-grown, instead of the heavily taxed legal products available from shops.



© AAP/IMAGE Cigarette prices are approaching \$40 a packet in Australia, but the country's smokers are using finding clever ways to buy cheap tobacco instead of giving up (stock image)



From buying illegal 'chop chop' tobacco to buying black market cigarettes under the counter, the hacks used by smokers are rising faster than the price of a pack (pictured are illicit cigarettes seized in January)

'Price hikes don't bother me,' said one social media user in a discussion about tobacco prices.

'I don't buy smokes from the supermarkets, that's what "chop chop" is for. I'm happy with getting 250 grams for 60 dollars, does me ages.'



Australians have become so adept at finding cheap cigarettes the rate of smoking cessation as slowed to a crawl (pictured are cigarettes seized last year)

Others said the trick to finding cheap smokes is knowing what shop to go to, with one person saying they frequent several different stores.

'Can get a pack of 20 under the table in Sydney for \$10,' said one person.

'I have been enjoying smoking at this price for years.'

While some complained that black market cigarettes smell bad, others disagreed, saying they can find good brands smuggled in from overseas for \$12 a pack.

In another clever price hack, young people in particular are switching to rolling tobacco in an attempt to maintain their increasingly expensive habit.

Despite being hit by a tax increase in September last year, smokers of roll-your-own tobacco make up about one third of the nations smokers.

The proportion of rolling tobacco smokers rose from 26 per cent in 2006 to 36 per cent in 2016, boosted by an 82 per cent increase in smokers under 40.

The latest tax hike is expected to result in a price increase of about \$3 for a typical packet, pushing prices up further still.

That means this year's price of 30 Winfield Blues for \$35.20 will soon hit \$38.20, with more excise hikes on the way in the next financial year.

Although cigarette prices keep rising, Australia recorded a mere 0.2 per cent drop in smokers in three years.

Australia came in at number seven worldwide, with Iceland topping the list with a 12 per cent drop, followed by Norway at seven per cent.

Rising prices have been accompanied by an increase in massive illegal tobacco busts.

In the last month alone the Australian Border Force has seized 20million cigarettes and almost 12tonnes of illegal tobacco.

On June 1 a joint Australian and Taiwanese operation intercepted two sea cargo containers full of black market smokes en route to Australia. The 20,100,000 illicit cigarettes would have resulted in about \$14.2million in lost revenue, according to the ABF

## Illicit tobacco busts in the financial year so far

- More than 52,500 detections of illicit tobacco in the 2017/18 financial year to April 30

- The ABF seized 129 tonnes of loose leaf and molasses tobacco

- A total of 173 million illicit cigarettes were found

- The total duty evaded on these detection is almost \$230 million.

Source: Australian Border Force



Poll

Do you think cigarettes in Australia are too expensive?

Yes, smokers are paying too much

No, smokers should pay more

I think tobacco prices are about right



Rather than pay the extra \$3 a packet, many Australians are buying 'chop chop' instead (pictured are cigarettes seized by the ABF)

Just four days earlier ABF officers seized 1.6tonnes of illicit tobacco during a series of raids in Adelaide.

The raids came three days after another bust, this time involving about 10 tonnes of illicit tobacco.

In the 2017/18 financial year to April 30 this year the ABF has made more than 52,500 detections of illicit tobacco. This includes 129 tonnes of loose leaf and molasses tobacco and 173 million cigarettes. The total duty evaded on these detection is almost \$230 million.



In the 2017/18 financial year to April 30 this year the ABF has made more than 52,500 detections of illicit tobacco (pictured is tobacco seized last year)

**Source:** <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5806173/The-hacks-Australians-using-buy-10-cigarettes-prices-rise-nearly-50-packet.html>