

# Illegal tobacco

**Criminals profit. Your community pays.**

## What is illegal tobacco?

- Tobacco grown, manufactured or produced in Australia without a licence.
- Imported tobacco for which no duty has been paid.
- Tobacco sold without payment of taxes.

# \$1.89 billion

went to criminals instead of the community\*

Growing tobacco in Australia for commercial sale or personal use is illegal.

\*2020–21

## Life cycle of illegal tobacco



Organised crime syndicates plough the land, ready to plant tobacco seedlings.



Seedlings take 2 to 3 months to grow into mature tobacco plants.



Mature tobacco plants are large and leafy and many have long, trumpet-shaped, white-pinkish flowers.



Harvested tobacco leaves are dried in a kiln and then cut and sold as loose tobacco, otherwise known as 'chop-chop'.

## Would you recognise a tobacco plant?

- 2.5 metres tall
- Large green leaves
- Long trumpet-shaped, white-pinkish flowers
- May resemble kale, cabbage or corn.

## Signs of an illegal growing operation

- Intense labour production between November and May
- People approaching real estate agents, landowners or farmers to lease land
- Unusual earthworks along creeks and rivers
- Unexplained and potentially unlawful use of water resources
- An unexplained strong tobacco odour
- Unusual source of loose tobacco.

The ATO is part of the Illicit Tobacco Taskforce (ITTF), which was established on 1 July 2018 to detect, disrupt and dismantle serious organised crime syndicates that deal in illicit tobacco.

Up to 30 June 2023 ITTF results are:

**> 210,000 kilograms**

Seized and destroyed

**> \$2.1 billion**

Estimated excise value

## Let's cut illegal tobacco off at the root

- Report growing operations
- Stop buying illegal tobacco products
- Report illegal tobacco products being sold
- Report suspicious activity.

Phone **1800 060 062** to anonymously report suspicious activity.  
Visit [ato.gov.au/illegal tobacco](https://ato.gov.au/illegal tobacco) for more information.



Australian Government  
Australian Taxation Office