

South Africa's Tobacco Bill process faces scrutiny as experts uncover flaws

Issued by [VPASA](#)

3 May 2024

As we wrap VApril, a month dedicated to education and awareness about vaping, the Vapour Products Association of South Africa (VPASA) recommits itself to keeping the public informed about the ongoing process for South Africa's Tobacco Products and Electronic Delivery Systems Control Bill (the Tobacco Bill). Most recently, several public hearings about the Bill took place nationwide. The hearings served as a vital platform wherein stakeholders could engage in dialogue with the government and provide an understanding of the potential impact of the proposed legislation on public health and consumer choice.



Asanda Gcoyi, CEO at VPASA.

“Public hearings are an integral aspect of the process for any bill under consideration to become part of South Africa’s legislation. Unfortunately, the public hearings process for the Tobacco Bill brought several shortcomings to light,” says Asanda Gcoyi, CEO at VPASA. “Specifically, the lack of public education about the provisions of the bill compromised meaningful participation by those in attendance and raises concerns about the validity of the perspectives shaping the legislation.”

Gcoyi’s apprehension is not without merit as session participants lacked a comprehensive understanding of the Bill, with many equating vaping to traditional tobacco smoking, highlighting a fundamental misunderstanding of the difference between the two. Further, the hearings process was marred by logistical challenges, including sudden cancellations, venue changes and postponements, as well as the selection of inadequate locations that were either inaccessible to the public or too small to accommodate the number of participants and stakeholders alike. “Abrupt cancellations of hearing sessions, such as the one that was supposed to be held in Grabouw in the Western Cape, hundreds of participants locked out of the Tshwane and Heidelberg sessions, as well as inadequate awareness campaigns, deprived community members of the opportunity to engage in what is a crucial process of any proposed legislation.”

Instead, VPASA and Gcoyi support a recommendation by the Lesedi Black Business Forum president, Tshepo S. Mazibuko, who requested that the bill be tabled at the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), which has the capacity to facilitate thorough deliberations and consensus-building across diverse stakeholders. “This

recommendation underscores the importance of inclusive governance in crafting effective public health policies. Efforts must be made to improve the organisation and accessibility of hearings and participants must be well-informed about the underlying principles of the Bill to ensure meaningful dialogues can take place,” Gcoyi adds. It is hoped that the seventh Parliament will be more deliberate in facilitating meaningful public participation, recognising its legal obligations to do so as confirmed by the courts and taking seriously the mandate conferred by voters on 29 May 2024. The sixth Parliament Legacy Report, No. 41 of 2024 also highlighted the procedural issues expressed by speakers during public hearings.

With April earmarked for broader education and awareness about vaping, VPASA emphasises the need for members of the vaping community to continue participating in all processes of the proposed Bill that will collectively shape and inform inclusive regulatory decisions.

For further information on the proposed Tobacco Bill, visit vpasa.org.za.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>