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From the President

23 February 2017

Environmental Health Policy and Projects
Health Protection Service
Locked Bag 5005
Holder ACT 2611

Via Email: hps@act.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Community consultation: Smoke-Free Playgrounds

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) welcomes the opportunity to participate in the open community consultation regarding the ACT Government's proposal to establish a smoke-free area 10 metres around children's play equipment in Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government-owned public playgrounds and play spaces.

The RACP is a diverse organisation responsible for training, educating and representing over 23,000 physicians and paediatricians across Australia and New Zealand, including paediatricians, public health physicians, thoracic specialists, oncologists and addiction medicine physicians.

The RACP's members strongly support Smoke-Free Playgrounds in the ACT for a number of reasons, including the health effects of exposure to secondhand smoke, the role-modelling of smoking to children, and the need to bring ACT practices in line with other Australian states and territories.

As your discussion paper notes, exposure of children to secondhand smoke may result in numerous health issues including decreased lung function, respiratory symptoms, middle ear disease, decreased sense of smell and the possibility of long term developmental effects. Further risks are associated with children ingesting cigarette butts which may cause nicotine poisoning.¹ Given that no level of exposure to secondhand smoke is free of risk, the RACP strongly supports Smoke-Free Playgrounds.

The RACP acknowledges the influence of role-modelling of adult smoking which may encourage young people to smoke, similarly decreasing visibility may contribute to young people viewing smoking as socially unacceptable.² Given smoke-free playground areas

¹ Scollo, MM and Winstanley, MH. Tobacco in Australia: Facts and issues. Melbourne: Cancer Council Victoria; 2015. Available from www.TobaccoInAustralia.org.au

² Ibid

have been established in all other states and territories with the exception of the ACT, it is important that the ACT introduce equivalent legislation.

Public health measures have had a significant impact on smoking levels; however smoking related illnesses still cause significant harm in Australia. The RACP continues to be a strong advocate for the introduction of policy and legislative measures that contribute to further reducing the prevalence and uptake of smoking, with the aim of Australia becoming a 'smoke-free' society.

Please contact [REDACTED], Policy Officer on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] should you require further information.

Yours sincerely

Dr Catherine Yelland PSM