



16 June 2016



Via Email: [Redacted]

Dear [Redacted]

Tobacco Amendment Bill 2016

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the draft *Tobacco Amendment Bill 2016*.

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

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. Public health measures are working, evidenced by the decrease in the daily smoking rates which has halved over the period between 2013 and 1991. Despite this progress, an estimated 15,000 Australians still die every year as a result of smoking-related illnesses, demonstrating that there is a great deal of work yet to be done.^{1 2}

The proposed changes in the *Tobacco Amendment Bill 2016*, as part of Victoria's commitment to state-level controls to reduce smoking and its impact, are a good step in the right direction. The evidence demonstrates that going to bars or clubs where smoking is permitted is a strong risk factor in young adults taking up smoking for the first time³, and so we commend the proposed changes and the fact that they take a broad approach and include both dining and drinking areas.

¹ Australian Institute for Health and Welfare. National Drug Strategy Household Survey detailed report: 2013. Canberra: 2014 Cat. no. PHE 183.

² Australian Government, Department of Health. Tobacco Control: Key Facts and Figures. <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/tobacco-ktf#footnotes>. Accessed 1 June, 2016.

³ McDermott L, Dobson A and Russell A. Changes in smoking behaviour among young women over life stage transitions. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 2004;28:330-5. Available from: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15704696>. Accessed 1 June, 2016.

However, we do note that the amended legislation does not ban smoking in outdoor drinking areas where 'snacks' can be served if those outdoor areas are less than 75% enclosed. Given that no level of exposure to second-hand smoke is free of risk, the RACP strongly supports moves to make **all** outdoor dining and drinking areas tobacco-free.

The use, sale and promotion of e-cigarettes have drawn increasing national and international attention, including ongoing debate regarding appropriate regulation. The RACP has consulted widely across its membership base on this specific matter, and made a number of public statements.⁴

The RACP's view is that the evidence base in Australia and internationally is currently insufficient to enable definitive conclusions on the net risks or benefits of e-cigarettes at the population level. However, it is vital that the gains made in recent decades to move towards a tobacco-free society are not lost or reversed. The RACP is especially concerned with the potential for the increasing use, and particularly widespread promotion, of e-cigarettes to renormalise smoking and for these products to act as a gateway for young people to take up tobacco smoking. We therefore support the moves to restrict their sale, advertising, display, and packaging in line with the regulations on tobacco products.

With evidence in this area constantly evolving, the RACP strongly recommends that any legislative response to e-cigarettes be reviewed and updated on a regular basis, to reflect the most effective, evidence-informed research.

Should you require any further information regarding this response, please contact [REDACTED], State Executive Officer (Victorian and Tasmania), at [REDACTED] or on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

Associate Professor Ian Fraser
Chair, Victorian State Committee
The Royal Australasian College of Physicians

⁴ Media Release. RACP welcomes crackdown on sale of e-cigs to minors in NSW. 31 August 2015 <https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/racp-welcomes-crackdown-on-sale-of-e-cigs-to-minors-in-nswabdc50afb261c2b08bff00001c3177.pdf?sfvrsn=0>; and, Media Release. RACP welcomes plan to ban sale of e-cigarette to minors. 6 May 2015 <https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/pdfs/150506racpwelcomesplantobane-cigarettetominors.pdf?sfvrsn=2>