

Smoke-free Playgrounds



FACT SHEET 5

Tobacco use is the single greatest cause of preventable disease.

Reducing its use is a major and effective strategy for promoting public health.

Sample Resolution

Concern over the harmful health effects of environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) began to emerge in the 1970s, and in Australia, this concern culminated in the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) report *Effects of Passive Smoking on Health*ⁱ.

The report found that illnesses associated with passive smoking included:

- Lung cancer
- Respiratory disease in children
- Attacks of asthma

A further NHMRC publication, *The Health Effects of Passive Smoking – A Scientific Information Paper*, released in 1997ⁱⁱ, identified the following additional health effects:

- Coronary heart disease
- Asthma in children
- Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Glue ear in children

Community attitudes towards smoking have been changing over a period of timeⁱⁱⁱ. Due to the mounting evidence showing the harmful effects of passive smoking, and also because of litigation, by the mid-1990s smoke-free work-place policies had been introduced extensively throughout both public and private sectors. While all state and federal government offices had become smoke-free, bans and restrictions were also introduced in many shopping centres, hospitals, schools, child care settings and entertainment venues, as well as in the transport sector. In September 2000 the NSW Parliament passed the Smoke Free Environment Act, which prohibited smoking in a wide range of public places.

Sample Resolution

Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS) is particularly harmful to children, because –

- Their lungs and body weight are small, so the dangerous substances in smoke are more harmful
- Children are not always able to move away from other people's smoke, as adults are able to do.

Infants or children who breathe other people's smoke are more likely than children unexposed to:

- Develop middle ear infections
- Suffer more ear, nose, throat or chest infections, croup and wheezing
- Become asthmatic with ongoing asthma attacks
- Develop pneumonia and bronchitis^{iv}

Children also model adult behaviour. Children of smokers are more likely to smoke than other children^v. There is strong public support for better, and more wide-reaching, tobacco control activities^{vii}.

Measures that discourage children and young people from smoking are particularly strongly supported.

Tobacco use is the single greatest cause of preventable disease. Reducing its use is therefore a major and effective strategy for promoting public health. As the entire community bears the social cost of smoking, it behoves all sections of the community to contribute to reducing its prevalence.

Council has a role in advocating better public health for its residents. Council has existing smoking bans in place – all council buildings are smoke-free to protect both the health of Council staff and members of the public. Health organisations like the Cancer Council NSW are now urging stronger smoking bans in public places not yet covered by legislation.

Sample Resolution

While second hand smoke is generally not seen as a big concern in outdoor venues, it can still cause serious health problems for children, pregnant women and many other individuals who suffer from allergies or medical conditions like asthma and heart disease.

Launceston City Council has recently adopted smoking exclusion zones around playground equipment and Council controlled sporting venues. Many major sporting venues around Australia, including Stadium Australia, Telstra Dome, the MCG, the WACA and ANZ Stadium have become smoke-free in an effort to reduce community exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke, and to make venues more family-friendly.

It is proposed that Council ban smoking around all children's playground areas and around playing grounds. While it is acknowledged that such measures are difficult to enforce, the erection of signage around these areas will act as a deterrent, and will also have an educative role throughout the community.

Recommended Motion –

That Council –

1. Ban smoking within 10 metres of all children's playground equipment;
2. Ban smoking around all playing fields and sporting grounds;
3. Erect signage around playground equipment and playing fields to indicate that these designated areas are smoke-free;
4. Ensure that events run or sponsored by Council should be smoke-free;
5. Send a motion to the Local Government Association for inclusion in the business paper for November 2003 which supports the 10 metre exclusion zone.

Sample Resolution

For more information on smoke-free parks, playgrounds and outdoor public spaces, contact The Cancer Helpline on 13 11 20.

ⁱ National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). *Effects of Passive Smoking on Health. Report of the National Health and Medical Research Council Working Party on the Effects of Passive Smoking on Health*. Adopted at the 101st Session of the NHMRC, June 1986. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1987.

ⁱⁱ National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), *The Health Effects of Passive Smoking—A Scientific Information Paper*. Commonwealth of Australia. Canberra, November 1997. (<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/advice/nhmrc/foreword.htm>)

ⁱⁱⁱ Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer. *Quit Evaluation Studies* (series). Victorian Smoking and Health Program. Melbourne 1985-2003. (<http://www.quit.org.au/index2.html>)

^{iv} National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), *The Health Effects of Passive Smoking—A Scientific Information Paper*. Op cit.

^v U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Youth & Tobacco. Preventing Tobacco Use among Young People – A Report of the Surgeon General*. Centers for Disease Control (CDC). National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Office on Smoking and Health. 1995.

^{vi} AIHW2002. 2001 National Drug Strategy Household Survey: detailed findings. AIHW cat. No. PHE 41. Canberra: AIHW (Drug Statistics Series No. 11).

^{vii} Walsh RA, Tzelepis F, Paul CL, McKenzie J. Environmental tobacco smoke in homes, motor vehicles and licensed premises: community attitudes and licensed premises. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 2002 ;26:536-42.