

Research Director
Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane, QLD 4000

14 December 2015

Dear Research Director,

Please accept this short comment as a submission for the *Inquiry into smoking and tobacco use at universities, technical and further education facilities and registered training organisations* on behalf of the Nossal Institute University of Melbourne. Dr Nathan Grills is a Public Health Physician and senior researcher at the Nossal Institute for Global Health at the University of Melbourne and Nicole Hughes is a researcher at the same institute.

Firstly, we congratulate the Queensland government for being a leader in tobacco control measures in local communities, such as their laws on smoking in outdoor cafes. We encourage the Queensland government to continue its leadership in this domain and commence tobacco free policies across all Queensland Universities and educational campuses.

In April 2014 Victorian Universities unanimously went smoke free and have received very little opposition from students or staff. I was a *smokefree representative* for the University of Melbourne during this time. This experience provided an insight into the general acceptance of such a policy and the supportiveness of the university community: students, staff and visitors. Melbourne University implemented a phased approach, commencing with the introduction of designated smoking areas through to its recent progression to a completely smoke free campus from 28 November 2015.

In response to the new smoke free policy of Melbourne University; in September 2015 we conducted a survey, with the support of the Dean, into the affects and perceptions of smokers and non-smokers at Melbourne University. This survey found that 75% of smokers who were interviewed wanted to quit, and there was widespread support among smokers and non-smokers in support for the smoke free policy. Of the smokers interviewed 81% wanted support from the university to assist them to quit tobacco use, with the most common support requested being peer support and nicotine replacement therapy.

This survey also suggested that 57% of surveyed smokers were disrupted in their smoking routine secondary to the policy, and that more that 30% had cut down their cigarette consumption secondary to the commencement of the policy. Most promising of all, were a number of people who reported that the smoke-free policy had promoted them to attempt to quit.

The evidence behind smoke-free campuses is strong and continues to grow, with several recent peer review studies finding a link between smoke-free policies and reductions in campus smoking prevalence, second-hand smoke exposure and student

perceptions of peer-smoking prevalence, as well as an increase in social norms favouring smoke free environments.

As measures aimed at denormalisation of smoking are implemented, it is hoped smoking rates will decrease to negligible levels, so that the youth and university students of the next generations be able to enjoy tobacco-free lives. Students and young people are at the highest risk of commencing smoking, and if they do then at the highest possibility of becoming long-term smokers. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the most evidence based and effective tobacco control policies are implemented in a timely and comprehensive manner.

We recommend complete smoke free university policies, such that people cannot smoke anywhere on campus. This requires an incremental approach across all educational campuses. Recent studies suggest the impact on staff and students is minimal, and the benefits of such policies far outweigh any potential negative impacts.

Smoke free laws are feasible and they work, they should be implemented through all universities and educational campuses in Australia. We wholeheartedly support the banning of all smoking on education campuses in support of the health and wellbeing of all students, staff and the community. We strongly urge the government to bring in these policies into effect across all Queensland education campuses.

Kind regards



Nathan Grills



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