

Health and Ambulance Services Committee

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 8 December 2015 6:16 AM
To: Health and Ambulance Services Committee
Subject: Public submission - Tobacco and other Smoking Products (Smoke-free Places) Amendment Bill 2015

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Research Director
Health and Ambulance Services Committee
Parliament House
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear research director,

Please accept my submission regarding the **Tobacco and other Smoking Products (Smoke-free Places) Amendment Bill 2015**

I write to support the Tobacco and other Smoking Products (Smoke-free Places) Amendment Bill 2015, because it will contribute to achieving the following aims:

- Further de-normalise smoking, thereby assisting and encouraging current smokers to quit
- Reduce Queensland smoking rates below the current 14% of the adult population.
- Reduce the number of non-smokers being exposed to the well documented danger of second-hand smoke.
- Reduce the alarming human toll from tobacco. Not only the premature deaths, but the years or decades of debilitation and reduced quality of life suffered by many people with chronic damage due to tobacco. As a Registered Nurse of over 30 years, I have seen this human toll way too much.
- Reduce the alarming health costs from tobacco, which according to Queensland's Chief Medical Officer, Dr Jeanette Young, costs Queensland \$2.5 Billion annually.
- Further change public perception regarding where it's acceptable to smoke in public, and to help even more people to understand their tobacco smoke impacts on people around them (Our previous tobacco reform laws have already majorly shifted public awareness to the extent that the public will welcome further reforms. Smoke-free zones are often self-regulated by both smokers and non-smokers alike, meaning that following an education campaign, non-smoking signage may be not required at all new smoke-free locations).

However, I am concerned, that the bill has some major omissions. While I congratulate the government for this bill, stronger actions are required to:

- **Phase out Designated Outdoor Smoking Areas (DOSAs) in outdoor areas of licenced premises.**
 - I attend a pub and a night club once to twice a week and observe first hand how DOSAs allow patrons to bypass the intentions of this bill. Both of these premises use the 2 metre wide buffer zone between the DOSA and the smoke-free area (as apposed to a solid wall). However the entire buffer zones are used by patrons, exposing many patrons to second-hand smoke - which the World Health Organisation state has no safe level of exposure. Why is this acceptable?
 - I observe the DOSAs are the "cool" places to hang out and frequently more patrons are inside the DOSA, than are outside it. Non-smokers and former smokers are enticed by peer pressure to join their smoking friends in the DOSA, often staying there for hours being exposed to second-hand smoke. I'm aware of former smokers resuming smoking permanently, after accepting cigarettes from their friends while inside DOSAs. The fact that DOSAs are places were some former smokers resume smoking permanently, is very alarming.
 - DOSAs have been in place for a good number of years - it is beyond time that they were progressively phased out, to further de-normalise smoking and assist more smokers to quit.

- **Ban smoking in all casino high-roller rooms.**
 - Queensland should be proud we are leading the country on tobacco reform - but why is this not consistent regarding high-roller rooms? It's glaringly obvious there is one rule for us and another rule for them (patrons and staff in high-roller rooms). Why is the health of casino workers in high-roller rooms not considered worthy of protecting from the known dangers of passive smoking? Why are occupational Health and Safety laws apparently not adhered to in high-roller rooms regarding second-hand smoke? How many more years/decades are we going to remain inactive on this? (while the health of staff members and patrons suffer). Either we are serious about tobacco reform or we are not - if we are, then we ban smoking in all high-roller rooms - simple as that.
 - The World Health Organisation state there is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke, so all measures must be taken to stop exposure to second-hand smoke.
 - According to Dr Jeanette Young while addressing the Parliamentary briefing into this bill, one in ten smoking related deaths are of people who have never smoked.

- **Drastically reduce the number of tobacco sales outlets.**
 - According to Dr Jeanette Young while addressing the Health and Ambulance Services Committee at the Parliamentary briefing into this bill, Queensland currently has 8,000 tobacco retail outlets. Why does the number of retail outlets selling one of the most addictive lethal substances known (tobacco), far outnumber outlets selling essential health-promoting items, for example supermarkets and pharmacies?
 - Tobacco is not a relatively benign product. When used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, tobacco kills not only it's direct users, but also bystanders in close proximity. Health Minister Cameron Dick told Parliament that each year 3,700 Queenslanders die as a result of smoking (over 10 people every day) and smoking is responsible for over 36,000 hospitalisations each year. The Minister is also reported as stating this costs the state economy \$6.1 Billion in lost productivity annually - this is in addition to the cost to the health budget of \$2.5 Billion annually, according to Queensland's Chief Medical Officer, Dr Jeanette Young.
 - Why is tobacco sold in every service station, corner shop and supermarket across the state? Why do you have to line up 8-deep at the supermarket check-out when buying healthy food, yet to buy tobacco you can go to the front counter, and buy tobacco immediately without a queue?

- Government regulates guns and alcohol because of the harm they can cause. We don't see guns and alcohol for sale at every petrol station, corner shop and every supermarket - so why do we allow this with tobacco? It just does not make sense.
 - Tobacco should be classified and regulated as a dangerous substance, possibly under the Poisons Act. As such, the number of retail outlets for tobacco, should be drastically slashed, further de-normalising tobacco, and greatly assisting users to quit.
 - The time is now, that the status quo must be stopped. The health of Queenslanders, not to mention the health budget, demands we drastically reduce the number of tobacco retail outlets. It's great that tobacco outlets now must not display tobacco - the next logical step is to slash the number of outlets to one thousand or less, effectively making tobacco less readily available, and greatly assisting smokers to quit and former smokers to avoid a relapse.
- **Ban tobacco sales to all people born after a certain year - e.g. 2003**
 - While this may initially seem a radical idea - it's certainly necessary.
 - Tobacco not only kills and maims it's users, it also kills and maims non-users in close proximity.
 - Tobacco should only be able to be purchased by registered tobacco users. If no new tobacco users are registered for people born after a certain year (e.g. 2003), this will drastically reduce the number of smokers over time.
 - The reality is that much stronger action is required, because:
 1. Tobacco kills approximately 3,700 Queenslanders annually - or, over 10 people each day.
 2. Tobacco is responsible for over 36,000 hospitalisations of Queenslanders annually.
 3. Tobacco costs the Queensland Health budget \$2.5 Billion annually.
 4. Tobacco costs the state economy an additional \$6.1 Billion in lost productivity annually.
 5. If tobacco were a brand new product trying to be sold for the first time, it would be declared illegal and totally banned from sale. So why is it so readily available now?

While I wholeheartedly support this bill, every week of further delay in implementing the required further actions listed above, results in further preventable deaths, and avoidable health expenditure and lost productivity.

Sincerely

Phil Browne
Registered Nurse

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"I always wondered why somebody doesn't do something about that. Then I realised I was somebody": Lily Tomlin