

From:

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

Dear research director,

I support the introduction of a Queensland licencing scheme for both tobacco wholesalers and retailers and for this scheme to be regulated by Queensland Health.

A tobacco licencing scheme should include the following components:

1. Mandate that all tobacco wholesalers and retailers must be licenced.
2. Ensure the scheme is regulated by Queensland Health, because this is a public health issue.
3. Provide Queensland Health with the addresses of all tobacco sellers.
4. Allow for adequate training of staff selling tobacco.
5. Monitor the compliance of tobacco sellers with legislative requirements.
6. Allow Queensland Health to communicate directly with tobacco sellers - e.g, to inform them of changes to the law, etc.
7. Allow for conditions to be placed upon the manner in which sales are made.
8. Allow for a tobacco seller's licence to be revoked.
9. A legislative requirement that the number of tobacco sellers be progressively reduced over a number of years, to below 20% of the current estimated 8,000 - 12,000 sellers.
10. A legislative requirement that the sale of tobacco is banned to all people born after a certain year - e.g. 2003.

Licencing which includes the above components will achieve the following outcomes:

- Reduce the availability of tobacco.
- Further de-normalise smoking.
- Encourage more smokers to quit.
- Assist former-smokers to remain nonsmokers by reducing the likelihood of impulse tobacco purchases.

These outcomes are consistent with the intent of all other tobacco legislation

reforms introduced in recent years/decades.

Further tobacco reforms are required because Queensland's Chief Medical Officer, Dr Jeanette Young, and Health Minister, Cameron Dick, report that tobacco use results in:

- The death of approximately 3,700 Queenslanders annually - or, over 10 people each day.
- Over 36,000 hospitalisations of Queenslanders annually.
- Costing the Queensland health budget \$2.5 Billion annually.
- Costing the Queensland economy an additional \$6.1 Billion in lost productivity annually.

As a Registered Nurse of over 30 years, I have seen this preventable human toll way too much. 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 use.

Tobacco legislation to date has focused on:

1. Reducing the number of places where people can smoke.
2. Banning the display of tobacco by sellers.
3. Plain packaging.

So, on the one hand we are saying "Quit smoking, it's bad for you" - yet, tobacco has continued to be readily available at 8,000 - 12,000 Queensland sellers, and to all people of legal age - there have not been any concurrent restrictions on the supply or accessibility of tobacco (other than at music festivals and sales to minors). Restricting the supply of tobacco is an obvious area of tobacco reform that must be addressed and legislated.

Queensland has an estimated 8,000 tobacco retailers according to Queensland's Chief Medical Officer, Dr Jeanette Young. However, I note this number was stated as 12,000 tobacco retailers according to the 2002 report on the Health and Ambulance Services Committee's website by the Allen Consulting Group, titled "Licencing of Tobacco Retailers and Wholesalers". Regardless of whether the true number of tobacco sellers is 8,000 or 12,000 - both these figures are way too high. Yes, 8 - 12 THOUSAND places in Queensland selling tobacco, which if it were a brand a new product trying to be sold for the first time, **would be declared illegal and totally banned from sale**. Why is a product that would be banned if introduced today - i.e. be granted ZERO sales outlets - currently on sale at 8,000 - 12,000 outlets? When used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, tobacco kills not only it's direct users, but also bystanders in close proximity.

Why is tobacco - society's largest cause of preventable deaths - so readily available in 8,000 - 12,000 locations? Firearms and alcohol are licenced and you can not buy firearms or alcohol in thousands of corner shops, petrol stations and supermarkets, for good reason. Liquor licences even include restricted hours when alcohol can be purchased. I understand the number of liquor licences are also restricted (or capped), so too should the number of tobacco licences.

Maintaining this status quo of 8,000 - 12,000 tobacco sellers is not acceptable if we are serious about reducing the toll from tobacco use as far as possible. It's great that tobacco sellers must not display tobacco - the next logical step is to slash the number of sellers, effectively making tobacco less readily available, and

greatly assisting smokers to quit and former smokers to avoid a relapse.

Tobacco, with its huge toll on society and no safe level of exposure according to the World Health Organisation, seems to have open slather with regard to its unrestricted supply. To date, the commercial interests of big tobacco companies and tobacco sellers have taken priority over the health of Queenslanders. The health of Queenslanders needs to take priority and the availability/supply of possibly the world's most addictive substance, tobacco, must be restricted. Why do you have to line up 8-deep at the supermarket check-out to buy healthy food, yet to buy tobacco you can go to the front counter, and buy tobacco immediately without a queue?

Tobacco legislation to date has resulted in a significant reduction in smoking rates. Had we previously reduced the number of tobacco sellers, thereby making tobacco less accessible and further encouraging and assisting smokers to quit, the smoking rate could be even less than the current 14% of Queenslanders. By reducing supply of a product - e.g. by not selling tobacco in every corner shop, supermarket and petrol station, this can help to reduce demand.

It's beyond time to protect the health of Queenslanders (and reduce the huge economic cost to society), by introducing a fair-dinkum tobacco licencing scheme, which includes major reductions in the number of tobacco sellers and bans tobacco sales to people born after a certain year.

Sincerely

Phil Browne
Registered Nurse

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