

Mr Brook Hastie
Research Director
Health and Ambulance Services Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Hastie

I appreciate the opportunity to make a submission to the Health and Ambulance Services Committee on the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Extension of Smoking Bans) Amendment Bill.

I wish to particularly comment on the proposal in Clause 7 of the Bill to prohibit smoking at public transport waiting points. This is an important and necessary action to be taken by the Parliament and is consistent with other action taken to prevent the known negative impacts of cigarette smoke.

Members of our community by and large adopt an orderly and courteous approach to waiting for public transport. In the case of busy bus stops, this involves waiting near the stop and, typically, in either a line or other manner that recognises (with expected exceptions such as for the elderly) a "first come –first served" approach. This approach is to be commended. However when acting in this way, commuters can become captive to impacts from people who wish to smoke at the bus stop.

Action has been taken to protect individuals from regular exposure to cigarette smoke at work places, whilst travelling on public transport, in some cases within cars and even as they walk through the door of their workplace. But they have no protection from being exposed on a twice daily basis to cigarette smoke at their bus stop.

As an example, my daughter commenced working in Brisbane City approximately 12 months ago. As a matter of choice, but also for personal health reasons, she has always avoided cigarette smoke. In her social life and previous employment situations the combination of legislative smoking prohibitions and the location of her workplaces meant that she had the capacity to avoid any consistent exposure to cigarette smoke. Since commencing work in the city, the need to catch peak hour bus services has taken that capacity from her.

The simple reality is that if she wants to be able to get on the busy bus, she needs to wait very near the bus stop with the other commuters. In doing so, she can no longer avoid cigarette smoke. In preparation for their journey on the same bus, smokers will ensure they fit in one or more cigarettes before the bus arrives. The smoker or smokers will be in close proximity thereby significantly limiting any potential for reducing exposure levels due to smoke dissipation. Community impact is often compounded by smokers also wishing to remain close to the bus stop and discarding cigarette butts on the ground.

This is clearly a situation where very significant numbers of individuals are engaged in a normal and regular undertaking and in the course of that undertaking have little reasonable scope for avoiding cigarette smoke. In a number of such situations governments have acted to restrict smoking in the interests of public health.

This issue requires a state-wide approach. Queensland local governments have acted inconsistently and ineffectually in using current legislation to deal with the issue of smoking at bus stops. In Brisbane City where bus transport is most heavily used, no action has been taken.

There are numerous other areas where buses play an important role in public transport including local government areas surrounding Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and regional cities.

Models for state-wide action are in place. The New South Wales *Smoke-free Environment Act 2000* prohibits smoking at a bus stop including any area where persons queue or gather when waiting at a bus stop. The New South Wales legislation is able to operate in tandem with any smoking limitations introduced by local governments.

There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand cigarette smoke. Action has been taken to protect individuals in circumstances where it is difficult or impossible to avoid second-hand smoke. Waiting at bus stops is a very common situation where regular involuntary exposure has not been addressed. The Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Extension of Smoking Bans) Amendment Bill provides Parliament with the opportunity to remove that gap in Queensland's public health policy.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'David Swan', written in a cursive style.

David Swan