

INQUIRY INTO TOBACCO SMOKING IN
NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation:

Name: Mr Michael Stevens

Position: Pharmacist

AOD Consultant

Telephone:

Date Received: 28/03/2006

Theme:

Summary

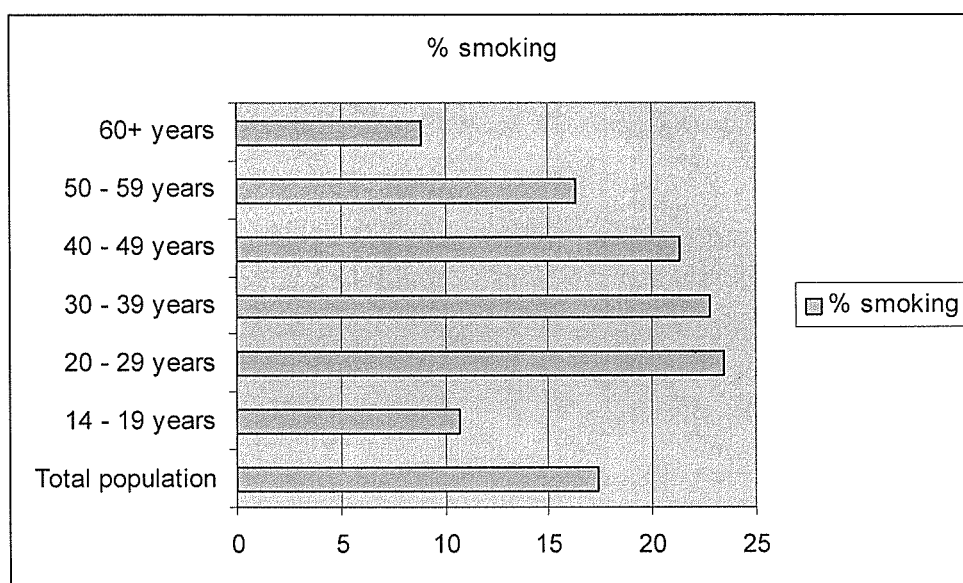
Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Tobacco Smoking

Strategies to reduce tobacco use.

Introduction.

At the present time there are several strategies that have the potential to reduce tobacco use and this shows in the reduction of current use to 17.4% of the population.

(2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey)



The table shows the percentage of the population who smoke tobacco daily.

However when you look at the percentage of age groups smoking the figures are more alarming. Around **23%** of the 20 – 49 age group are smoking. A significant number of people (14 – 19 years) are smoking, but they are not legally able to purchase tobacco.

It shows that there is very little reduction in the number who smoke in the age groups

20 to 49 years and this must be a reflection on the number of people who quit smoking as a response to advertising campaigns.

The quit smoking campaigns and the pictures of smoking damage to lungs will not register with people who are in the pre-contemplative stage of change. (Reference Prochaska and DiClemente) It will not necessarily attract people who are in the contemplative stage.

Many people decide to quit smoking and enter some form of treatment but there are a significant number of people who fail to quit or relapse after treatment.

There needs to be more emphasis on reducing under age smoking and a strategy to prevent the doubling in the number of smokers from the age of 19 years.

There is a potential to increase the quit smoking rate in the 50 – 59 age group so that the percentage smoking is closer to the 60+ age group.

Tobacco is a drug and not a food. If it were to be introduced now as a new drug it would not get TGA approval for sale. But supposing it did get approval current labeling does not comply with TGA requirements. It does not comply with food labeling requirements.

The proposal to prohibit display of cigarettes in retail outlets may be useful to complement other strategies.

New Strategies.

The following strategies are suggested as a means to reduce the attractiveness of smoking, to increase the awareness of the fact that tobacco is being smoked and to increase the awareness of the dangers of tobacco and to increase the “yuk” factor of smoking.

1. Packaging.

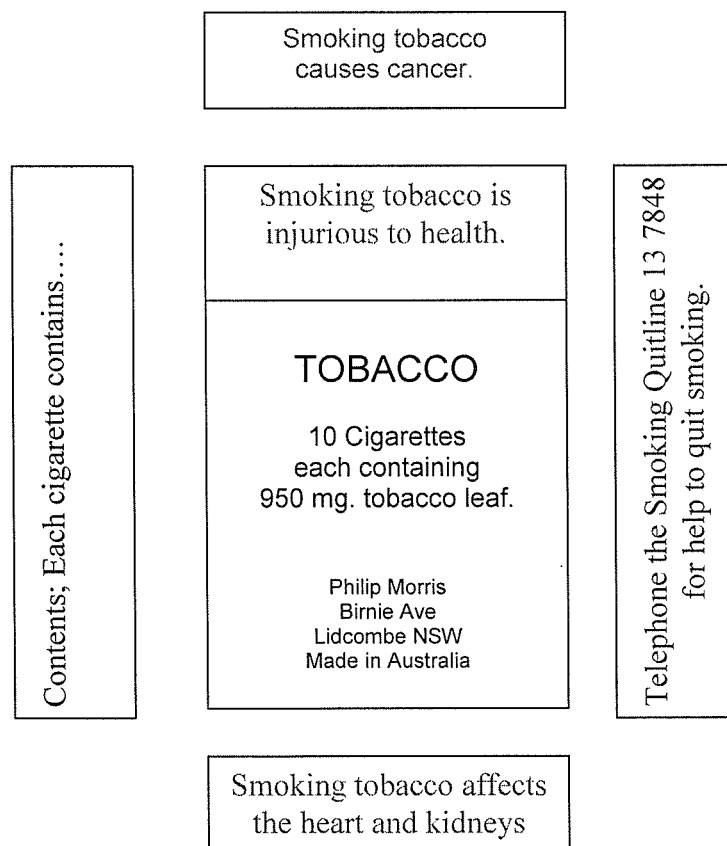
- All tobacco products should be sold in generic “no frills” packaging. The removal of brand names removes the appeal, snob value or cult following of specific brand names that are designed as a marketing tool. This is relevant for people in the 19 – 29 age group where the number of smokers doubles. e.g. if one smokes “Longbeach” this has little connection with tobacco and young women might think it “cool” to smoke “Longbeach” while they may not consider smoking a no frills cigarette or a “roll your own”
- Determine if filters offer any protection to the majority of smokers. Many smokers alter their smoking procedure to compensate for the effect of filters.
- Consideration should be given to requiring loose tobacco to be sold in boxes rather than pouch packs, making it less user-friendly to carry around and standardising labeling with cigarette packets.

2. Labelling

- All tobacco products should emphasise the word “tobacco” and minimise the word “cigarette” in order to reinforce to people that they are smoking tobacco. This will counter the belief that some cigarettes are mild or low tar or safer than others. Eventually smokers will understand that they are smoking tobacco.
- Packages of tobacco products should list the content of tobacco by weight, or by weight per cigarette, a list of all additives and chemicals that were not in the original tobacco leaf.
- Packages of tobacco should list the maker’s name, address and place of manufacture.
- Printing on tobacco packages should be black on white using a designated font and size with warning messages in red.
- The obverse of the product description side of the package could have a full colour health warning photo.
- The ends of the package should contain health warnings.

The adoption of these measures

1. will reduce the attractiveness of the pack
2. make the packaging look drab
3. reduce the perceived attractiveness of smoking to novitiates
4. increase the “yuk” factor that may induce people to give up smoking.
5. reduce the impact of mass display and reduce any advantage to particular manufacturers.
6. reduce vending machine sales
7. reduce the growth of the market by the introduction of new brands.
8. reduce the possibility of marketing cigarettes to targeted groups.



3. Legislation and regulation

- Consider regulating the chemical content of cigarettes especially ingredients that make the act of smoking more attractive.
- Consider regulating the design of the cigarette e.g. the use of air holes in the cigarette paper to control taste.
- Consider regulating the nicotine content of cigarettes if research shows that there is an optimal level that will deliver the desired amount of nicotine with the least amount of tar.
- Consider limiting each manufacturer to produce only one product. If more than one is allowed, the number should be limited and they should be known only as “Blend 1” and “Blend 2”
- Regulations should also apply to products manufactured overseas so that they also have to comply with the same conditions as local manufacturers.
- Consider restricting the production of cigarettes to existing manufacturers
- Consider limiting the pack size to 10 cigarettes.
- Consider funding resources for General Practitioners, Health Workers and Pharmacists to acquire the skills to intervene and promote quitting to people in the over 49 age group as this is a group with increasing health problems that are exacerbated by smoking.

4. The outcome of these proposals.

- People who smoke will still be able to buy tobacco products.
- It is not prohibition that would have limited effect and increase black market dealing.
- It will not prevent young people trying out smoking so education and information for young people remains important.

- It does not prevent existing manufacturers continuing their business.

Any change in the quantity of tobacco purchased will be gradual so economic change or loss for manufacturers, distributors and retailers will be phased in.

- There will be some immediate loss to some sections of the industry such as importing, distribution and marketing but this can be countered with a phase in period so they have plenty of warning.
- There will be an effect on government's tax revenue but this will occur over time and will be reduced by the reduction in health costs.

The implementation of any of these suggested strategies will need to be researched and will take time but this should not be an excuse to procrastinate. It will need cooperation at state and federal level. It will be the integrity not to be swayed by the tobacco industry lobby and will need the dedication of all political parties. Each year that change is delayed another 19,000 people will die of smoking related causes. I believe that the introduction of generic tobacco packaging will reduce the number of smokers and the resulting morbidity.

Thank you for your time and effort working on the committee and for the opportunity to present this submission.

Michael Stevens

Pharmacist and AOD Consultant.