

EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE;
INQUIRY INTO THE TOBACCO PRODUCTS CONTROL AMENDMENT BILL 2008

SUBMISSION FROM:

The Western Australian Health Promotion Foundation (Healthway)

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Healthway

Healthway (the Western Australian Health Promotion Foundation) was established in 1991 under Section 15 of the Tobacco Control Act 1990 as an independent statutory body reporting to the Minister for Health. Healthway now functions under Part 5 of the Tobacco Products Control Act 2006.

Healthway objectives are to fund activities that promote health, particularly that of young people, provide research grants to organisations engaged in health promotion programs and research and provide sponsorship support for sport, arts and racing activities that encourage healthy lifestyles and provide opportunities to promote health.

Healthway receives approximately \$19.5 million annually from WA State Treasury Department, of which \$17.5 million is allocated in sponsorships and grants.

Healthway's contribution to tobacco control

Healthway has made a significant contribution to reducing tobacco consumption in Western Australia, investing nearly \$3.5 million in the first three years alone on replacing tobacco sponsorship and billboard promotions in WA. In the last 18 years, Healthway has led the way in creating smoke-free environments, and in the early years required sponsored organisations to implement smoke-free indoor areas as a condition of funding, ahead of legislation in 1999.

In 2006 Healthway introduced a funding condition that all sport arts and racing organisations receiving more than \$20,000 in Healthway sponsorship were required to implement smoke-free policies in all outdoor seated and viewing areas under their control. Tobacco control remains a high priority health issue for Healthway's work and in the last financial year 33% of all grant and sponsorship monies were allocated to tobacco control (nearly \$6 million).

Tobacco Products Control Amendment Bill 2008

Smoke-free outdoor areas, including outdoor eating & drinking areas, playing areas and beaches

Healthway strongly supports the proposed legislation to ban smoking in outdoor areas where food or drink is served or consumed, in children's play and sporting areas, and on beaches where safe swimming areas are designated.

In fact we consider that smoking should be banned at all public gatherings, including popular outdoor settings and events.

The vast majority of West Australians do not smoke and most now accept smoke free environments as normal. Healthway experience over many years of sponsoring sport, arts, racing and community events to be smoke-free is that this is welcomed. Indeed, independent evaluation results conducted for Healthway clearly demonstrate this:

- Every four years the Health Promotion Evaluation Unit at Edith Cowan University conducts a major survey of organisations receiving funding from Healthway during the preceding year, and includes a significant number of questions about health related environment policies. This survey was most recently undertaken in 2005 with approximately 400 Healthway-sponsored organisations.

The vast majority (92%) confirmed they had indoor smoke free policies in place and pleasingly 58% indicated they also had policies in respect to outdoor smoke-free areas. The majority indicated they did not find it hard to introduce or enforce a range of health-related environment policies and the vast majority indicated that promotion and acceptance was high – 98.4% of Board members, 97.5% of staff, 97.2% of volunteers, 92.4% of members/subscribers accepting the policies.

- Surveys at Healthway sponsored events

In the last 12 years many sport and entertainment venues in WA have embraced smoke free policies as a result of Healthway sponsorship. These include major sporting stadia such as Subiaco Oval, the WACA ground and Members Equity Stadium, which remain smoke-free when hired to third parties, including for major music events. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, including from interstate and overseas visitors.

Healthway also regularly conducts surveys of patron attitudes at sponsored events as part of our planning for healthy environment changes for the future. A survey conducted at the Perth Royal Show in 2006 included questions to assess the views of more than 200 individuals attending the Show about making Side Show Alley and then the entire Perth Royal Show smoke free.

The interviewers deliberately surveyed an equal split of smokers and non-smokers to ensure that smokers' views were taken into account. Despite inflated smoker numbers in the sample, the survey showed strong support for a smoke free Royal Show (60% agreed with the proposal and 77% indicated their attendance would not change or would possibly increase if the Royal Show became smoke-free). As a result, the Royal Agricultural Society will hold its first fully Smoke-Free Royal Show in 2009, sponsored by Healthway.

Similar surveys have been undertaken at a range of other major events (sport, arts and racing), with strong support for smoke-free events or extending smoking restrictions.

Banning smoking in outdoor public places could also have a positive and significant impact on littering. It is our understanding that in 2006, a national audit of litter (McGregor Tan Research. Keep Australia Beautiful national litter index:

Western Australia) found that cigarette butts accounted for 53% of the litter stream in WA.

Enforcement

Healthway is confident that the legislation will be largely self-enforcing given the evidence we have that there is strong overall community support for public spaces to be smoke-free. We acknowledge that there will be a period of adjustment as the public and proprietors or managers of public places become fully aware of their obligations and the places to which the legislation applies.

Healthway is also aware that some stakeholders may raise obstacles such the potential for abuse from disgruntled patrons asked to refrain from smoking, concerns in relation to local government workloads and the timeliness of responses to complaints especially for remote and sparsely populated communities. Our experience and evaluation results however show that the public is accepting of bans on smoking where there is clarity about where and when they may smoke and where bans are applied uniformly across like settings. Similarly, our experience in working with local government shows that many councils are supportive of extending smoking restrictions to outdoor areas, to the extent that they have introduced their own local by-laws. However, state-wide legislation would provide consistency and would greatly strengthen the effectiveness of these local measures.

We also believe that monitoring and enforcement of legislation can be accommodated within existing duties and resources when it is supported by a majority of the community. This is also more likely where there is adequate support for training and education, and back-up in dealing with the occasional recalcitrant proprietor or manager of a venue that is in breach of legislation.

Use of tobacco products in passenger cars

As a confined space, smoking in cars exposes others in the vehicle to the harmful effects of second hand smoke (Martin et al, 2006). Smoking in cars and other vehicles raises the levels and concentrations of second hand smoke to significant levels.

Many states in the USA have already adopted laws prohibiting smoking in cars carrying children. In Australia, legislation is now in place banning smoking in cars when children are present in South Australia, Tasmania, New South Wales and Queensland, and will come into force in Victoria from January 2010. It would be a great disappointment if WA were to lag behind in this area, given the lead role WA has played in tobacco control in the past.

Research conducted by national and state health organisations has shown growing community support for legislation to ban smoking in cars carrying children, confirmed also in the research commissioned by the Cancer Council WA as part of the development of its smoke-free home and car campaign in 2007.

Children are particularly vulnerable. Being exposed to second hand smoke as a child may lead to health issues such as increased risk of Asthma, and respiratory problems later in life. Children are heavily reliant of parents/other adults to

protect them from second hand smoke, but education approaches alone are not enough.

Healthway therefore supports the prohibition of smoking in motor vehicles in which children (under 18 years of age) are passengers.

Display of tobacco products

Healthway welcomes moves to further restrict the display of tobacco products at points of sale. Removing tobacco products from sight will make an important contribution to reducing the 'social acceptability' of smoking to children and young people and further reduce opportunities for the tobacco industry to promote its brands.

Legislation ending all tobacco retail displays has already been passed in New South Wales and Tasmania and will come into force in early 2009 in NSW and in early 2011 in Tas. Similar legislation has also been announced in Victoria as part of the state government's tobacco control strategy. Again, it would be disappointing if WA was to fall behind the other Australian states on this issue.

Concluding remarks

Healthway is strongly supportive of the measures proposed in the Tobacco Products Control Amendment Bill 2008. Smoking is declining because of policy enhancements to date and public education to increase understanding about the harms caused by tobacco to the individual and to non-smokers. However, the community is generally less aware of the harms associated with second-hand smoke and public education and policy should continue to play an important role in further raising awareness in this area.