

Ms. Jenny Leaman  
[tfg@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:tfg@parliament.tas.gov.au)  
Secretary  
Legislative Council Sessional Committee Government Administration A  
Tobacco Free Generation  
Parliament of Tasmania  
Parliament House  
Hobart TAS 7000

9th June 2015

Dear Ms Leaman,

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission to the Legislative Council Enquiry into the *Public Health Amendment (Tobacco-free Generation) Bill 2014*.

Firstly we wish to state our strong support for the aspiration of Tasmania becoming the healthiest state by 2025 (1). To achieve such a goal the highest and most urgent priority must be to reduce and ultimately eliminate to the greatest extent possible the consumption of tobacco products.

The first image highlights a range of tobacco control measures introduced since 1987.



Tasmania has been at the forefront of such measures and most recently we have seen the introduction of smoke free pubs, dining areas and in some public places. However, there is growing evidence that these most recent measures are creating resentment and hostility among those who have become addicted to tobacco products. Below we provide images of the access road to the North West Regional Hospital and North West Private Hospital.



North West Regional Hospital  
Cancer Centre - under construction

Vandalised 'No Smoking' signage  
A clear rejection of this new smoke free area

Efforts to extend smoke free areas are likely to be of limited success and potentially exacerbate conflict with existing addicts. This example demonstrates the practical difficulty and/or lack of enforcement of such approaches. What is not evident from these photos are the pregnant women and construction workers resorting to smoking in their cars. Smoke free areas have reduced the visibility of smoking and serve to disguise the persistent, unacceptably high rates of smoking within our community.

Claims that the current suite of tobacco control measures is sufficient and likely to be effective in further significantly reducing smoking rates in Tasmania are not supported. Of particular concern over 40% of males in the age brackets 25-34 and 35-44 are current smokers (2), which goes against the overall trend. This represents a large cohort who will continue to smoke and serve as role models for younger Tasmanians.

Beyond substantially increasing funding for extensive media campaigns it is our view that we are reaching the limits of existing measures that target smoking rates among current smokers. Therefore, further measures are needed to specifically drive a reduction in the uptake of smoking and prevent a new generation of addicts.

The *Public Health Amendment (Tobacco-free Generation) Bill 2014* reflects this understanding in seeking to prevent the uptake of smoking among young Tasmanians. The provisions allowing current smokers to continue purchasing tobacco products enhances the practicality of this proposed amendment as it avoids escalating conflict with those who are addicted and makes unintended outcomes such as the stimulation of a black market highly unlikely.

In reflecting on the practicality and enforceability of the *Public Health Amendment (Tobacco-free Generation) Bill 2014* we have considered alternative approaches to reducing smoking rates. For example, the concept of a smokers licence (3) would require all smokers to purchase an annual licence to be allowed to purchase tobacco products from licenced retailers. Under this proposal retailers would be required to purchase licence scanning equipment that would monitor the pre-purchase commitment i.e. a self imposed maximum purchasing limit set by the smoker. Such a proposal has merits, though introduces new layers of administration and potential issues in relation to practicality and social acceptability.

In stark contrast the *Public Health Amendment (Tobacco-free Generation) Bill 2014* would be much easier to implement as the mechanisms to support its introduction and enforcement are already in place. We are aware that the current retail compliance with proof of age requirements is very high, around 98% as reported by the Department of Health and Human Services. The future requirement of checking year of birth will be a simpler task than checking date of birth and there is little reason to believe compliance with this proof of age requirement would fall dramatically.

Social acceptability is likely to be a key determinant in the success and ease of implementation. A recent survey (4) demonstrated overall support for the Tobacco Free Generation proposal at 69.1% and support among 18-29 year olds at 87.9%.

Tasmania's major health research and education institutions support this proposal. At the time of writing medical students from across Tasmania are preparing resources for educating school students around lung health and the health benefits that will come from the implementation of the tobacco free generation.

In conclusion we believe the *Public Health Amendment (Tobacco-free Generation) Bill 2014* is well targeted in seeking to reduce the uptake of smoking among young Tasmanians, implementation will be highly practical as most of the necessary mechanisms are already in place and it has a high level of social acceptance.

We would welcome the opportunity to elaborate on this submission.

Yours sincerely,

Drs Nick & Michelle Towle  
48 River Avenue  
Heybridge, Tasmania 7316  
Ph (03) 6435 4559

#### **References:**

- (1) Ferguson, M, A Healthy Tasmania. Available from <[http://www.premier.tas.gov.au/releases/a\\_healthy\\_tasmania](http://www.premier.tas.gov.au/releases/a_healthy_tasmania)> [24 February 2015]
- (2) ABS Table 7.3 Australian Health Survey : first Results - Tasmania 2011-12
- (3) Chapman, S 2015, Making Smoking History: The case for a smoker's licence. Available from: <<http://theconversation.com/making-smoking-history-the-case-for-a-smokers-licence-42362>> [5 June 2015]
- (4) Cancer Council of Tasmania, Position statements. Available from: <<http://www.cancertas.org.au/about-us/position-statements/>> [21 May 2015]