

Is it time to outlaw cigarette sales in Australia?

Embargoed until 8.00am ACST (9.30am AEDT) on Tuesday 3 October

A Menzies School of Health (Menzies) researcher believes a ban on the sale of cigarettes and other combustible tobacco products needs to be considered.

In a commentary published in the international journal Tobacco Control, Dr Marita Hefler said “The ongoing availability of cigarettes is an historical anomaly. Any other consumer product that kills up to two-thirds of its long-term users remaining legal is unimaginable.”

The commentary was published in response to a research paper which found up to 6.6 million premature deaths could be prevented over a ten year period in the US if smokers switched to e-cigarettes.

“E-cigarettes and heat-not-burn (HNB) products most closely mimic the nicotine delivery of cigarettes and have the greatest potential to displace the cigarette market.”

Debate about the potential benefits and risks of these products has divided the public health community in recent years, Dr Hefler says. “Combustible tobacco is the most harmful end of the nicotine product spectrum and should be phased out. E-cigarettes and HNB products are not harmless. However they are almost certainly lower risk than cigarettes for current smokers.”

In conjunction with phasing out cigarette sales, Dr Hefler is recommending that the less harmful products including e-cigarettes should be permitted in Australia with tight regulations equivalent to what is currently applied to cigarettes.

Ongoing independent research is also needed into the long term effects of using HNB and e-cigarettes, as knowledge is still evolving.

Embargoed link to commentary: <http://press.psprings.co.uk/tc/october/tc053969.pdf>

Public link once embargo lifts:

<http://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/lookup/doi/10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2017-053969>

Embargoed link to research: <http://press.psprings.co.uk/tc/october/tc053759.pdf>

Public link once embargo lifts:

<http://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/lookup/doi/10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2017-053759>

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Dr Marita Hefler is available for interview.

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Menzies School of Health Research

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