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VAST MAJORITY OF PARENTS SUPPORT SMOKEFREE DINING

A VicHealth poll of 1000 Victorian parents with children aged under-17 shows the majority (92%) of smoking and non-smoking parents agree that smokers should not be allowed to light up wherever they want.

The VicHealth community attitudes survey was conducted in 2012 and released today in light of a State Government announcement to extend smoking bans around Victoria and investigate smokefree dining as an option. It shows community support for smokefree areas, particularly to protect children from exposure to cigarettes.

When specifically asked about their level of concern regarding their children seeing someone smoke, almost three-quarters (73%) were very or somewhat concerned. Parents of young children were even more concerned (79%) about exposing children to smoke.

Fewer than 10 per cent of parents had ever asked someone to stop smoking in a public place, but 35 per cent of parents said they had wanted to. The poll also revealed that if outdoor dining areas were made smokefree, eight in 10 (81%) smoking parents would still take their children there.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter congratulated the State Government on considering smokefree dining and said she looked forward to the results of the consultation.

“There are so many reasons why a smokefree dining ban, in tandem with other recent smokefree measures already introduced by the State Government, will benefit the community,” Ms Rechter said.

“Not only should children be protected from second-hand cigarette smoke, but it’s also important that smoking isn’t seen as a normal adult habit.

“We also want to help smokers, because eight in 10 Victorian smokers have tried to quit at least once and many smokers will need multiple attempts to kick the habit for good. More smokefree measures will allow non-smokers to enjoy clean air, while helping people who are trying to quit succeed for their health.

“Smokers are – on the whole – respectful of legislation and smokefree areas. We believe smokers will act responsibly, like they have in the past when other smokefree measures have been introduced.

“These measures empower non-smokers to ask someone whose smoking is affecting them at an outdoor cafe, near the jungle gym, at the pool, or between the flags at the beach, to stop. This is really important because our research shows that while a lot of people have often wanted to tell someone to stop smoking they haven’t felt comfortable to do so.”

Smoking is the leading preventable cause of death in the state and continues to kill 4,000 Victorians every year, costing the Victorian community \$2.4 billion in direct health costs and lost productivity annually.

The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) welcomes moves by the State Government to protect more Victorians from the harms of tobacco by prohibiting smoking at government buildings and announcing a consultation to extend smokefree areas to outdoor dining.

See over page for a timeline of smokefree legislation in Victoria.

Timeline of recent smoke free legislation changes in Victoria

- covered areas of train platforms, tram shelters and bus shelters (2006)
- underage music/dance events (2006)
- enclosed workplaces (2006) and licensed premises (2007)
- enclosed outdoor dining or drinking areas [with a roof] (2007)
- government school grounds (2009)
- motor vehicles if a person aged under 18 years is present (2010)
- patrolled beaches (2012)
- outdoor public playgrounds (2104)
- public swimming pools sea baths, skate parks and children's sporting events (2014)
- all areas of railway stations and raised platform tram stops (2014)
- state penitentiaries (1 July 2015)