03 Preventing tobacco use

OUR 3-YEAR PRIORITY

More people living smoke-free and less harm among resistant smokers.

WHY?

Tobacco smoking is still the leading single preventable cause of disease and death in Victoria.

Victoria has been a leader in tobacco control for many years and much of this achievement has been borne out of the longstanding partnership between VicHealth and the Victorian Government to support the activities of the Quit program in tobacco control.

Since the *Tobacco Act* was introduced to Victoria in 1987, smoking rates have dropped to 13.3%; however, every year, smoking causes 4000 preventable deaths in Victoria and costs $5 billion.

SMOKE-FREE ENVIRONMENTS

Smoke-free initiatives

VicHealth supports smoke-free initiatives as part of a raft of measures to reduce tobacco uptake and consumption across the board, including price, public education and controls on the marketing and visibility of cigarettes and smoking.

Smoke-free areas have multiple benefits for the community. They ensure clean air can be enjoyed by everyone; they reduce young people's exposure to modelling of smoking behaviour; they support community norms against smoking around others; and they also help people who have quit smoking to stay on track.

This year, the Victorian Government banned smoking on train and tram platforms as well as within 10 metres of outdoor public children's playground equipment, skate parks and sporting venues during organised underage sporting events, and outdoor areas at public swimming pools.

By 2015, smoking will be phased out among staff and inmates in Victoria's prisons.

Parents support smoke-free dining

Community support for smoking bans continued to grow.

VicHealth has been involved in discussions with the Victorian Government and various other groups about smoke-free outdoor dining areas.

Results of a VicHealth poll of 1000 Victorian parents with children aged under-17 showed 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 in August 2014 in light of a State Government announcement to extend smoking bans around Victoria and investigate smoke-free outdoor dining as an option. It shows community support for smoke-free outdoor areas, particularly to protect children from exposure to cigarettes.

Our collective efforts have played a huge part in the dramatic reduction in the Victorian smoking rate.

This year, the Victorian Government banned smoking on train and tram platforms.

There is growing community support for a smoking ban in outdoor dining areas.

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)
- Motor vehicles if a person aged under 18 years is present (2010)
- Patrolled beaches (2012)
- Outdoor public playgrounds (2014)
- Public swimming pools, sea baths, skate parks and children's sporting events (2014)
- All areas of railway stations and raised platform tram stops (2014)
- Childcare centres, kindergartens (or preschools) and primary and secondary schools (as of 30 June 2015)
- Within 4m of an entrance to children's indoor play centres, and public hospitals and registered community health centres and certain Victorian Government buildings (as of 30 June 2015)
- State prisons (as of 1 July 2015)

Victorian Universities Tobacco-Free Initiative
This year, many Victorian universities went smoke-free in an extraordinary show of voluntary health promotion activity across the state. And Deakin University has taken on the task of getting *every* university in the state 100% smoke-free over the next 12 months. This marks the first time an entire state's university institutions have come together to voluntarily ban smoking.

All Victorians should be proud of the leadership our universities have taken to start removing tobacco from their campuses.

PUBLIC EDUCATION + SMOKING CESSATION

Preventing uptake and supporting people to quit smoking remains VicHealth's primary strategy. Our collective efforts, in partnership with organisations such as Quit Victoria, Cancer Council Victoria, the Heart Foundation (Victoria) and local, state and Commonwealth governments, have played a huge part in the dramatic reduction in the Victorian smoking rate.

Our commitment to whole-of-population, established tobacco control initiatives is paramount. We continue to be a key partner of the Victorian Government and a major funder of the Quit program.

Smoking rates in Victoria at record low
The impact of Australia's comprehensive approach to tobacco control including plain packaging (introduced to law in 2012), continued tobacco tax increases and social marketing is clear. Data from the Australian National Drug Strategy Household Survey indicates a record decline in the prevalence of smoking between 2010 and 2013. Figures released by the Federal Treasury this year show 3.4% fewer cigarettes were sold last year in Australia than in 2012.

The most recent data from the Victorian Smoking and Health population landline phone survey shows that in 2012, 13.3% of Victorian adults regularly smoked. While regular smoking rates (daily or weekly) dropped to 13.3% in 2012, daily smoking rates fell to 11.7%. The prevalence of regular smoking declined most rapidly amongst the most disadvantaged Victorians between 2005 and 2012, reversing a trend in previous years for smoking rates to decline fastest amongst Victoria's most advantaged. More Victorian smokers want to quit and more are quitting successfully. Fewer young people are taking up the habit than ever before. These increases reflect a longstanding commitment to comprehensive tobacco control programs.

FUTURE FOCUS

Exploring harm reduction options
While proven approaches must remain at the forefront of tobacco control in Victoria, we also need to explore new and innovative approaches. Tobacco harm reduction is one of the areas where further research and discussion is needed.

In July 2014, VicHealth brought together leading Australian and international experts at a Tobacco Harm Reduction Forum in Melbourne to share research and policy experiences from overseas and reflect on current and potential future harm reduction policy responses, including electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) in Australia. While ENDS are relatively new, there are well established markets in the USA and Europe.

VicHealth will continue the discussion about tobacco harm reduction within Australia, but VicHealth's primary focus in the area of tobacco will continue to be investing in those existing proven and evidenced-based approaches that have been so successful in reducing smoking prevalence in Victoria.

COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION

During the year, VicHealth was represented on numerous committees, advisory bodies and working groups that shape tobacco policy and practice in Victoria and nationally, including:

- Quit Victoria Steering Committee
- Justice Health Ministerial Advisory Committee
- Smoking and Disadvantage Network
- Smoke Free Prisons Project Health Reference Group

" VicHealth has a fine tradition in thought leadership and innovation. It is always among the first to identify challenging emerging issues; to form the necessary strategic partnerships; and to invest wisely in approaches to developing and sustaining the field. "

PROFESSOR DAVID HILL AO
Cancer Council Victoria Honorary Associate