



- 1 SEP 2011

Office of the **Minister for Health**

Mr Neil Laurie
Clerk of the Parliament
Queensland Parliamentary Service
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I write in response to your letter regarding petition number 1651-11, tabled in Parliament on 2 August 2011, concerning stronger action required to reduce harm from tobacco use.

One of the five ambitions of the State Government's 2020 vision, *Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland*, is "Making Queenslanders Australia's healthiest people", with two Healthy Queensland targets: to have the shortest public hospital waiting times in Australia; and to cut obesity, smoking, heavy drinking and unsafe sun exposure by one third. In relation to smoking, Queensland is well on its way to achieving this target. In 2010, 15.5% of Queensland adults reported smoking daily and smoking rates are declining by 3.5% per year.

The Queensland Government takes the matter of smoking very seriously and has a multi-strategy tobacco control plan to reduce smoking rates. Queenslanders are benefiting from the nation's leading smoke-free laws for indoor and outdoor places; Statewide mass media, quit smoking campaigns, a sophisticated Quitline service and programs targeted at high risk populations. Our efforts in tobacco control will be further strengthened with the introduction of complete bans on the retail display of smoking and related products at general retailers and specialist tobacconists in the near future. Together, these initiatives are reducing the public's exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, contributing to a culture that supports smokers trying to quit, and discouraging young people from taking up the habit.

The issues and suggestions for Queensland's tobacco legislation raised in the petition are largely consistent with recommendations recently made by the Queensland Parliament's Social Development Committee in its Report on Chronic Disease in Queensland. The Government considered these issues and tabled its response to the Report on 29 April 2010. The report and response can be accessed online at <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/work-of-committees/former-committees/SDC>.

Firstly, issues of smoking at pedestrian malls and public transport waiting points are very specific to certain areas in Queensland. Empowering local governments to regulate smoking at problem malls and public transport waiting areas means that public concerns about exposure to tobacco smoke in crowded areas can be specifically targeted at a local level. In addition to several Government announcements in relation to this amendment and ongoing consultation with local governments, all Queensland local governments were formally advised of this power in writing in December 2009. Queensland Health is working with local governments to assist with the development of by-laws as appropriate.

I am advised that from 1 September 2011, the Brisbane City Council will implement a new no smoking local law in the Queen Street Mall under the newly established Smoke Free Places Local Law 2011. By taking steps to regulate smoking at Queen Street Mall, the Brisbane City Council is demonstrating its commitment to the health and well-being of visitors to and residents of Brisbane. It is commendable that the Council has taken the initiative to address concerns about tobacco smoking at Queen Street Mall and promote a supportive, smoke-free environment.

Since 1 January 2010, smoking has been banned in all vehicles where children under the age of 16 years are present. The ban on smoking in cars carrying children is intended to protect young children, who are often not in a strong position to object, from exposure to tobacco smoke in a very confined environment. Accordingly, and consistent with this intent, there are no plans to change the age limit of 16 years for the ban on smoking in cars with children.

The Queensland Government supports increases in tobacco prices as outlined by the National Preventative Health Taskforce and notes that this is a matter for the Commonwealth Government. Nationally and internationally, tax increases on cigarettes (which increase prices) are known to be the single most effective means available to governments to reduce smoking. It is noted that on 30 April 2010, the Commonwealth Government raised the tax on cigarettes by 25 per cent.

As part of a comprehensive review of smoke-free laws undertaken in 2007, all outdoor smoke-free provisions of Queensland's tobacco legislation were considered. A key point of difference in Queensland's approach, when compared to other Australian jurisdictions, is the decisive push for smoke-free outdoor places throughout the State. It is noteworthy that Queensland is currently the only jurisdiction in Australia to impose bans on smoking within four metres of the entrance to almost all enclosed public places, at major sports facilities, children's playgrounds, patrolled and artificial beaches, and at all outdoor eating or drinking places throughout the State.

It is the aim of Queensland Health to discourage smoking and eating in public places, and to provide as many non-smoking areas across the State as possible. Queensland Health continues to work closely with industry to assist compliance with the no smoking arrangements, and encourage as many smoke-free areas as possible.

I trust this information is of assistance to the petitioners.

Yours sincerely



GEOFF WILSON MP
Minister for Health