

New tobacco laws:

An overview

Background

Legislation governing tobacco products and smoking in Victoria has come a long way over the past four years with the Victorian Government implementing a raft of tobacco reforms including:

- reforms addressing youth smoking such as increasing the penalties for selling cigarettes to minors (November 2000)
- smoke-free dining laws (1 July 2001)
- smoke-free shopping centre laws (1 November 2001)
- smoking restrictions in licensed premises, gaming and bingo venues, and the Casino (1 September 2002)
- restricting tobacco advertising and displays within tobacco retail outlets (July 2001 through to January 2002).

These reforms have led to sustained declines in both adult and youth smoking rates in Victoria. The adult smoking rate in Victoria has decreased by approximately one-third from 1985. At present it is estimated that approximately 16.2 per cent of Victorians are smokers (people aged 18 years and over in 2003). Smoking prevalence amongst youth has also decreased from 22 per cent in 1999 to 17 per cent in 2002.

It is likely that policy approaches adopted in Victoria have contributed to these declines. Given the increasing widespread community support for tobacco reforms, this is an opportune time for the Government to introduce further reforms to continue to reduce smoking rates and decrease tobacco related harm in Victoria.

What are the objectives of the new laws?

The objectives of the new laws are to: prevent youth smoking by minimising influences on initiation and reducing access to tobacco; reduce the harms caused from passive smoke; and improve the operation and enforcement of the *Tobacco Act 1987*.

What are the new laws?

In summary, the new laws will:

- ban smoking in most enclosed workplaces from 1 March 2006
- ban smoking, the promotion of tobacco products and the sale of tobacco products at underage 'music/dance' events from 1 March 2006
- ban smoking in covered areas of train station platforms, trams stops and bus stops from 1 March 2006
- ban 'buzz marketing' and non-branded tobacco advertising from 1 March 2006
- strengthen laws to enforce the ban on cigarette sales to young people from 1 March 2006
- ban smoking in enclosed licensed premises from 1 July 2007.

The existing partial smoking restrictions on the casino, licensed premises and approved venues will continue to apply until 1 July 2007.

Does the community support the new laws?

Research conducted in 2004 reported that over 89 per cent of Victorians support stricter enforcement against supplying cigarettes to minors and over 80 per cent support smoking bans in the workplace. Community support for smoking bans in licensed premises is continuing to grow (see table 1 below).

Table 1. Percentage of Victorians who approve of government introduced smoking bans in bars, nightclubs and gaming venues, 2000 – 2004.

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Bars	57%	63%	68%	72%	78%
Nightclubs	55%	63%	66%	71%	80%
Gaming	66%	74%	79%	81%	85%

How did the Victorian Government consult on the new laws?

A three-month consultation period was undertaken with external stakeholders including unions, industry, health groups and the general public. In addition, consultations have been undertaken across Government.

As part of the three-month consultation period, written submissions were invited regarding the new laws and were received from unions, industry, health groups and the general public.

Who will enforce the new laws?

Local Councils will undertake the majority of the enforcement. Victoria Police, authorised transport officers and WorkSafe Victoria also have enforcement roles.

For further information:

Tobacco Information Line: 1300 136 775

www.health.vic.gov.au/tobaccoreforms/

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