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**Public opinion about the Victorian
Government's proposal to ban
smoking in hospitality venues by
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Daniella Germain

Prepared for:
Quit Victoria

Website:
www.cancervic.org.au/cbrc

ABSTRACT

In recognition of the harmful effects of exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (second-hand smoke), on October 12, 2004, the Victorian Government announced plans to introduce total smoking bans in licensed bars, gaming venues and nightclubs and all licensed premises by July 1, 2007.

Data from the 2004 Victorian population survey (conducted in November and December, 2004) indicate there is strong support for the implementation of total smoking bans in hospitality venues, with almost 8 out of 10 Victorian adults (79%) approving of the bans proposed by the Victorian Government. There was also moderate support among smokers, with almost half (48%) approving of the proposed bans.

Of those who supported banning smoking in hospitality venues, 69% thought the bans should be brought in sooner than the proposed date of July 1, 2007. Almost half (49%) of these respondents thought the bans should be introduced immediately, and a further 47% thought they should be implemented within 12 months (more than 18 months earlier than currently proposed).

Over one-quarter (26%) of regular bar goers (who attend bars at least once a month) said they would visit hotel bars and licensed bars more often if total smoking bans were introduced. A further 65% said the introduction of these bans would make no difference to the number of times they frequent bars. Similarly, over one-quarter (27%) of respondents who attend nightclubs at least once a month said they would go to nightclubs more often if total smoking bans were introduced in these venues, with a further 59% reporting the bans would make no difference to how often they visit nightclubs. Eight out of 10 regular gaming venue attendees reported that the introduction of total smoking bans in gaming venues would not change the frequency they visit these venues, with an additional 12% reporting they would go to gaming venues more often.

Overall, findings suggest there would be an overall increase in patronage of Victorian hospitality venues if total smoking bans were introduced: a 17% increase for bars, a 12% increase in patronage for nightclubs, and a 5% increase for gaming venues.

Contrary to arguments raised by Australian Hoteliers Association (AHA) that smokefree laws are too restrictive and would result in reduced patronage, findings indicate that patronage to bars, nightclubs and gaming venues are likely to increase with the introduction of total smoking bans in hospitality venues, and are strongly supported by the majority of the Victorian population.

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INTRODUCTION

Environmental tobacco smoke (ETS), or second-hand smoke, was classified in the early 1990s as an environmental carcinogen by the US Environmental Protection Agency.¹ In addition to scientific evidence of the harmful effects of exposure to ETS, recent legal decisions in Australia related to exposure to ETS in hospitality venues have raised greater awareness of the issue among the media and the public.^{2,3}

In recognition of the harmful effects of exposure to ETS, in recent years the Victorian Government introduced a range of legislative reforms related to exposure to ETS in public places. Through the *Tobacco (Amendment) Act 2000* and the *Tobacco (Further Amendment) Act 2001*, these reforms have included the introduction of a ban on smoking in enclosed restaurants and cafes, and in dining areas in premises with a general or club licence, from July 1, 2001, and the prohibition of smoking in enclosed retail shopping centres from November 1, 2001.

Additional smokefree policies in hospitality venues were introduced under the *Tobacco (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2002*. Applicable from September 1, 2002, these entailed restrictions on smoking in licensed venues such as hotels and clubs, bans on smoking in gaming machine areas of gaming venues, bans on smoking in bingo centres, and smoking restrictions with areas of exemption at Crown Casino.

Since the year 2000, the Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer (CBRC) has collected information regarding public opinion about the proposal to introduce smoking bans in hospitality settings, such as bars, gaming venues and nightclubs. Support for banning smoking in these venues has increased significantly between the years 2000 and 2003.⁴

On October 12, 2004, the Victorian Government announced plans to introduce *total* smoking bans in pubs, gaming venues, clubs and all licensed premises by July 1, 2007. The current report presents Victorian survey data relating to public opinion of the proposed introduction of total smoking bans in hospitality venues by July 2007. The data, collected in November and December 2004 (one month after the Victorian Government's announcement of the legislation), include public level of support of the proposed bans; whether these bans, if implemented, would have any impact on the frequency respondents visit these venues; and public opinion regarding the currently proposed timing of the bans.

METHOD

The data presented in this report are from a telephone survey of randomly sampled Victorian adults (aged 18 years and over) conducted in November and December 2004 (N=2998). This survey is part of the annual population surveys commissioned by CBRC from a market research company which interviews a representative sample of Victorians by telephone each year. The questions, designed by CBRC, are asked in an eight- to sixteen- minute interview conducted on weekends and weeknights from November to December.

The standard tobacco use question⁵ has been used to determine smoking status. In this report the 'tobacco smoker' category consists of those who smoke daily, weekly or less than weekly. The 'former smoker' category consists of anyone who has smoked at least 100 cigarettes or an equivalent amount of tobacco in their lifetime, regardless of whether they have ever smoked daily. Anyone who has smoked less than 100 cigarettes is classified as a 'never-smoker'.

In this report, those who smoke less than weekly are included in the category of tobacco smoker, rather than being presented separately as we do in our reports on smoking prevalence. This is because behaviour and beliefs that relate to second-hand smoke are more likely to be influenced by whether or not a person smokes at all than how frequently they smoke. For example, it is likely that many 'less than

weekly' smokers do so in some type of social context, and may therefore be less inclined to support the restriction of smoking in hospitality venues than former or never-smokers. They may also be less bothered by second-hand smoke than someone who does not smoke at all. For these reasons, anyone who smokes at all is treated as a smoker for the purposes of this report.

Statistical analysis

A comparison of the sample sociodemographic characteristics with the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates of the Victorian population⁶ revealed that women and older people were over-represented in the telephone survey samples. To adjust for this, the data were weighted by age and sex according to the 2001 population Census data.

To report the data, descriptive techniques such as frequencies have been used. When testing for significance of relationships between variables, logistic regression analyses have been used. Details of statistical tests of significance are not included in the report text. Where relationships between variables are reported, the probability of significance is less than 0.01, indicating a less than 1 in 100 probability that the effect was caused by chance. Where trends are reported, the probability of significance is between 0.05 and 0.01, indicating a 1 in 100 to 1 in 20 probability that the effect was caused by chance.

RESULTS

Bans on smoking in bars

Respondents were informed that the Victorian Government had recently announced plans to introduce total smoking bans in pubs, gaming venues, clubs and all licensed premises. Following this, they were asked: 'Do you approve or disapprove of the Government's plans to introduce total smoking bans in hotel bars and licensed bars?'

The majority of Victorian adults surveyed (79%) approved of the proposal to ban smoking in hotel and licensed bars (Table 1). Support was the strongest among those who were never smokers (89%) and former smokers (82%); however, almost half of smokers surveyed (48%) also approved of banning smoking in licensed hotels and bars.

Further analysis indicated that 'light' smokers (those who smoke less than 15 cigarettes per day) and 'medium' smokers (15 to 24 cigarettes per day), were significantly more likely than 'heavy' smokers (smoke 25 cigarettes or more per day) to approve of the proposal to ban smoking in licensed bars (53% and 46%, compared with 27%, respectively).

Table 1:
Views of smoking bans in bars by smoking status, 2004

Response	Total (n=2998) %	Tobacco smokers (n=593) %	Former smokers (n=868) %	Never smokers (n=1537) %
Approve	78.8	48.4	81.6	89.0
Neither approve nor disapprove	4.6	7.1	4.7	3.6
Disapprove	15.2	42.8	12.3	6.1
Don't know / Can't say	1.4	1.7	1.4	1.3

Patronage of bars if smoking bans were implemented

All respondents were asked: 'How often would you go to a hotel or a licensed bar for a drink?'. Respondents were then asked 'If the Governments' proposal to introduce total smoking bans in hotels and licensed bars is successful, would you be likely to go more often, less often, or would it make no difference to you?'.

Of those respondents who frequented bars at least once a month (44% of all respondents; $n=1326$), over one-quarter (26%) said they would visit hotel bars and licensed bars more often than they currently do if total smoking bans were introduced, with an additional 65% saying the introduction of these bans would make no difference to the number of times they frequent bars.

Smokers were more likely than never smokers or former smokers to say they would visit bars less if smoking bans were implemented (36% compared to 1% and 1%, respectively). However, 6 out of 10 smokers (63%) said that either the bans would make no difference to them or they would go to bars more often if smoking bans were introduced (Table 2).

Overall, these figures suggest that patronage of regular visitors to licensed bars would increase by around 17% (i.e. 26% reporting 'more often', minus 9% reporting 'less often') if total smoking bans were introduced.

Table 2:

Patronage of licensed bars* if total smoking bans in bars are introduced, by smoking status

Response	Total ($n=1326$) %	Tobacco smokers ($n=312$) %	Former smokers ($n=374$) %	Never smokers ($n=640$) %
More often	25.9	3.8	22.7	38.4
Less often	9.1	36.2	0.8	0.8
Would make no difference	64.8	59.3	76.2	60.8
Don't know / Can't say	0.2	0.6	0.3	0.0

* Respondents include those who visit bars at least once a month.

Bans on smoking in nightclubs

Respondents were asked: 'Do you approve or disapprove of the Government's plans to introduce total smoking bans in nightclubs?'.

Similar to public opinion on banning smoking in licensed bars, the majority of respondents (80%) also supported the Victorian Government's proposal to ban smoking in nightclubs, with a further 6% having no strong opinion (Table 3). Never smokers and former smokers were the most likely to support the proposed ban (89% and 82%, respectively); however, there was also moderate support from smokers, with over half (55%) approving of smoking bans in nightclubs.

Table 3:

Support for government-introduced smoking bans in nightclubs by smoking status, 2004

Response	Total ($n=2998$) %	Tobacco smokers ($n=593$) %	Former smokers ($n=868$) %	Never-smokers ($n=1537$) %
Approve	80.2	55.1	81.5	89.1
Neither approve nor disapprove	6.0	8.6	7.4	4.2
Disapprove	11.2	32.7	8.8	4.4
Don't know / Can't say	2.6	3.5	2.4	2.4

'Light' and 'medium' smokers were significantly more likely to approve of banning smoking in nightclubs (both 58%) than those who smoked heavily (25 cigarettes per day and over) (31%).

Patronage of nightclubs if smoking bans were implemented

Of those respondents who frequent nightclubs at least once a month (10% of all respondents; $n=302$), over one-quarter (27%) said they would go to nightclubs more often if total smoking bans were introduced in these venues. A further 59% reported the bans would make no difference to how often they go to nightclubs.

Smokers were the most likely to report they would visit nightclubs less with the implementation of these bans (43%, compared with 1% of never smokers and 0% of former smokers). However, an additional 57% of smokers said the bans would either make no difference to them, or they would go to nightclubs more often, if the smoking bans were introduced (Table 4).

Overall, these responses suggest that patronage of regular nightclub goers would increase by around 12% (i.e. 27% reporting 'more often', minus 15% reporting 'less often') if smoking bans were implemented in these venues.

Table 4:

Patronage of nightclubs* if total smoking bans in nightclubs are introduced, by smoking status

Response	Total ($n=302$) %	Tobacco smokers ($n=99$) %	Former smokers ($n=45$) %	Never-smokers ($n=158$) %
More often	26.8	3.0	33.3	39.9
Less often	14.6	43.4	0.0	0.6
Would make no difference	58.6	53.5	66.7	59.5

* Respondents include those who visit nightclubs at least once a month.

Bans on smoking in gaming venues

The Victorian Government's proposal to introduce total smoking bans in gaming venues was supported by the majority of respondents (85%), with a further 5% having no strong opinion (Table 5).

Although the strongest support for these bans came from those who had never smoked (92%), and those who were former smokers (87%), there was also strong support from smokers to ban smoking in gaming venues (66%). Again, support from smokers was more likely to come from those who were 'light' or 'medium' smokers (73% and 66%, respectively, approving of the bans) as opposed to 'heavy' smokers (41% approving).

Table 5:

Support for government-introduced bans in gaming venues by smoking status, 2004

Response	Total ($n=2998$) %	Tobacco smokers ($n=593$) %	Former smokers ($n=868$) %	Never-smokers ($n=1537$) %
Approve	85.2	66.3	86.5	91.7
Neither approve nor disapprove	4.5	6.4	5.1	3.4
Disapprove	9.1	25.5	7.3	3.9
Don't know / Can't say	1.2	1.9	1.2	0.9

Patronage to gaming venues if smoking bans were implemented

Of those respondents who reported visiting gaming venues at least once a month (13% of all respondents; $n=389$), the majority (80%) reported that if the Victorian Government's proposal to make smoking completely banned in all rooms of gaming venues is successful, it would not change the frequency they currently visit these venues.

Almost all never smokers (99%) and former smokers (98%) reported that the bans would make no difference to the amount they currently visit gaming venues, or that they would frequent these venues more often. Similarly, three-quarters (75%) of smokers said the bans would either make no difference to their patronage, or that they would go to gaming venues more often.

Overall, figures indicate that patronage of these regular gaming venue attendees would increase by around 5% (i.e. 'more often' responses, minus 'less often' responses) on current patronage levels, if total smoking bans were introduced to Victorian gaming venues.

Table 6:

Patronage to gaming venues* if total smoking bans in gaming venues are introduced, by smoking status

Response	Total ($n=389$) %	Tobacco smokers ($n=108$) %	Former smokers ($n=121$) %	Never smokers ($n=160$) %
More often	12.3	1.9	11.6	20.0
Less often	7.5	23.1	1.7	1.3
Would make no difference	79.7	73.1	86.8	78.8
Don't know / Can't say	0.5	1.9	0.0	0.0

* Respondents include those who visit gaming venues at least once a month.

Timing of bans

Respondents who *did not* disapprove (i.e. either 'approved' or 'neither approved nor disapproved') of introducing total smoking bans in hospitality venues ($n=2802$) were asked if they thought the current timing for introducing the bans (July 1, 2007) is about right, if the ban should be brought in sooner, or if more time should be allowed before the ban is introduced.

Over two-thirds (69%) of these respondents reported that total smoking bans in hospitality venues should be brought in sooner than the proposed date of July 1, 2007. A further 24% of respondents thought the timing was 'about right', while only 3% thought more time should be given before the bans are implemented.

Table 7:

Opinion on proposed timing of bans* - by smoking status

Response	Total ($n=2802$) %	Tobacco smokers ($n=479$) %	Former smokers ($n=823$) %	Never smokers ($n=1500$) %
About right	24.4	34.0	23.8	21.7
Brought in sooner	69.3	50.9	70.7	74.3
More time should be given	3.4	9.6	2.4	2.0
Don't know / Can't say	2.9	5.4	3.0	1.9

* Respondents include those who *did not* disapprove of introducing total smoking bans in either licensed bars, gaming venues, and/or nightclubs.

While the majority of never smokers and former smokers thought total smoking bans in hospitality venues should be brought in sooner (74% and 71%, respectively), over half of smokers (51%) also thought the bans should be introduced in sooner. An additional 34% of smokers thought the timing was 'about right'.

Of respondents who thought the bans should be brought in sooner ($n=1941$), just under half (49%) thought the bans should be implemented immediately (Table 8). A further 47% reported total bans should happen within 12 months. Only a small proportion (3%) thought the bans should be implemented in 18 months or more.

Over half of smokers (55%), and around half of never smokers (48%) and former smokers (50%) thought the bans should be implemented immediately.

Table 8:
When bans should be introduced* - by smoking status

Response	Total ($n=1941$) %	Tobacco smokers ($n=244$) %	Former smokers ($n=582$) %	Never smokers ($n=1115$) %
Immediately	49.3	54.9	49.8	47.7
In a month	6.4	9.0	7.0	5.5
In 6 months	21.7	19.3	21.5	22.3
In 12 months	18.5	10.7	19.2	19.8
In 18 months	2.2	1.6	1.0	3.0
More than 18 months	1.0	2.5	0.5	0.9
Don't know / Can't say	1.0	2.0	0.9	0.8

* Respondents include those who thought total smoking bans in hospitality venues should be brought in sooner than July 1, 2007.

DISCUSSION

In recent years, research has shown a significant increase in support among Victorian adults for the introduction of total smoking bans in hospitality venues.⁴ The findings from the current report indicate that there is also widespread support for the recently announced legislation which plans to ban smoking in hospitality venues by July 1, 2007.

Approval for the Victorian Government's legislation to ban smoking in licensed bars was strong, with almost 8 in 10 Victorians adults (79%), including almost half (48%) of smokers surveyed, approving of the new legislation. Similarly, the majority of respondents (80%) also supported the plans to ban smoking in nightclubs (including 55% of smokers), and in gaming venues (85% approval, including 66% of smokers).

Along with strong public support for banning smoking in hospitality venues, the majority (69%) of respondents who either approved, or neither disapproved nor approved of the bans, thought total smoking bans should be brought in sooner than the proposed date of 1 July, 2007. Of these respondents, almost half (49%) thought the bans should be introduced immediately.

Contrary to claims by the Australian Hoteliers Association (AHA) that smokefree laws will decrease patronage at hospitality venues,^{7,8} findings suggest that it is likely patronage to bars, nightclubs and gaming venues would all increase with the introduction of total smoking bans in hospitality venues. Respondents who visited hospitality venues at least once a month reported an overall increase in patronage to these venues if total smoking bans were introduced, increasing by 17% for licensed bars, 12% for nightclubs and 5% for gaming venues.

For years, the tobacco industry has collaborated with the hospitality industry to oppose smokefree environments.⁹ The argument that smokefree hospitality laws are bad for business has been discredited in numerous studies¹⁰⁻¹⁶ conducted in various states and countries where smokefree laws have already been successfully implemented in hospitality venues. Such research suggests the introduction of smokefree laws do not have a negative effect on patronage or revenue in these hospitality venues, but in fact appear to be good for business.⁹

The present study provides evidence that suggests the majority of Victorian adults (including smokers) support the new legislation to introduce total smoking bans in hospitality venues. In addition, findings indicate an overall probable increase in patronage to these venues if total smoking bans are introduced, which is likely to lead to increased revenue for the hospitality industry rather than the decrease predicted by the AHA.^{8,17}

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