

AMA/ACOSH/ASH National Tobacco Scoreboard Summaries 2013

In this, the 19th year of the Dirty Ashtray award, it is appropriate to reflect on the overall state of tobacco control around Australia's jurisdictions.

The Dirty Ashtray Award is presented annually by the Australian Medical Association (AMA), the Australian Council on Smoking and Health (ACOSH), and Action on Smoking and Health (ASH).

All States and Territories have endorsed the National Tobacco Strategy, which works to a goal to reduce the prevalence of smoking across Australia to no more than 10 per cent of the population by 2018. This is a worthy and achievable aspiration, but it will only be reached if there is a continuing commitment to action, and to the three main themes:

- sufficient funding at both the Commonwealth and State/Territory levels;
- consistency across all jurisdictions with respect to legislation and policy, with each State/Territory striving to meet demonstrated best practice; and
- robust legislation and policy to eradicate the interference of the tobacco industry in public health policy in line with Article 5.3 of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).

Australia leads the world with tobacco plain packaging legislation, but we cannot afford to be complacent. There are worrying signs of lacklustre commitment to the goals of the National Tobacco Strategy, through significantly decreased funding, lack of important legislation and policy, and the absence of safeguards against tobacco industry interference.

There are two joint winners of the "Dirty Ashtray Award" – Victoria and Queensland.

In the absence of any major developments since plain packaging (and the lack of any significant action on smoking in the recent Federal Budget), there is no clear overall award for an outstanding jurisdiction. There are, however, two Achievement Awards to recognise the commitment of two jurisdictions – the Australian Government and Tasmania.

The remaining jurisdictions have not been placed in any order, as they were all perceived to fall into the same band of achievement. The strong messages from this year are:

1. urgent action is needed in Victoria and Queensland;
2. there is a very real danger of complacency around the nation. Smoking remains a leading cause of premature death and disease. This is the time for governments to step up their commitment, not to fall behind. All governments are strongly urged to ensure adequate investment in strong, comprehensive mass media-led campaigns; and
3. the Australian and Tasmanian Governments deserve credit for seeking to take further action, and for resisting pressure from Big Tobacco.

Dirty Ashtray Award: jointly awarded to Victoria and Queensland

Victoria

This year, Victoria has earned the Dirty Ashtray Award through both a failure to act and a flagging commitment to outstanding and proven tobacco control activities.

Victoria has a poor record in relation to establishment of smoke-free public places.

Victoria is the only government without either state-wide bans on smoking in outdoor dining areas, or a commitment to their introduction. Victoria also does not have a tobacco licensing program.

Victoria has previously been recognised as a national and international leader in tobacco public education. Mass media campaigns have been a crucial factor in reducing smoking, with clear evidence demonstrating their effectiveness in reducing and preventing smoking among adults and children. The Victorian Government's decision to cut tobacco control funding is a deplorably short-sighted decision.

There is no global policy on smoking at public hospitals and health facilities.

The Victorian Government has no policy against accepting donations from the tobacco industry. The Victorian Government has high levels of investment in the tobacco industry, and has resisted any moves to divest.

Queensland

Queensland is the joint winner of the Dirty Ashtray award. This follows the Government's lack of investment in tobacco control, with significant funding cuts, no social marketing since May 2012, and a drastically reduced workforce, including the loss of the specialist team of tobacco control investigators targeting sales to minors and ten staff working directly in Indigenous tobacco control programs.

The Queensland Government has done little to protect public health policy from tobacco industry interference, with continued investment of public money in the tobacco industry, and no policy against tobacco industry political donations.

Queensland has historically had good legislation and policies in areas such as point of sale advertising and protection from passive smoking, although the application of designated outdoor smoking areas both creates confusion and fails to protect non-smokers.

It is hoped that the Queensland Government will restore funding to tobacco control, both for the broader community and in support of Indigenous health.

Achievement Award (High Commendation): Australian Government

The Australian Government continues to be seen as a world leader in tobacco control, leading and promoting action domestically and internationally. The Australian Government is specially commended for its unwavering commitment to world-first plain packaging legislation, after defending multiple time-consuming legal challenges, as well as acting to reduce the tobacco

duty free limit, and crack down on tobacco smuggling and electronic media tobacco advertising.

The Australian Government Future Fund also decided to cease investing in tobacco companies.

While the Australian Government's commitment and achievements deserve high praise, it is disappointing that it did not increase tobacco excise in the recent Budget. Such an increase – even simply keeping pace with New Zealand's excise – would have done much to reduce smoking among children and disadvantaged groups, while raising billions of dollars for much-needed prevention and other health system programs.

Achievement Award (High Commendation): Tasmania

Tasmania has taken strong steps to counter the high prevalence of smoking through legislation that in some respects is the best in Australia, banning smoking in enclosed public places and workplaces, as well as outdoor and partly enclosed public places, public transport waiting areas, and smoking in work vehicles.

Tasmania prohibits all point of sale advertising, with no exemptions, and is leading the nation with its comprehensive ban on retailer and customer reward schemes for tobacco products.

Tasmania's commitment deserves high praise. The Government's legislative measures now need to be complemented with an equal commitment to tobacco control funding, particularly for public education.

Other States/Territories

South Australia

South Australia, recipient of the State/Territory leadership and action award in 2012, continues to merit great credit for social marketing campaigns, legislation on tobacco promotion and access, and innovative approaches to tobacco control. South Australia has programs in place targeting high risk populations, including prisoners, homeless and disadvantaged people, people living with a mental illness, pregnant women and people who are culturally and linguistically diverse. There is also good action to protect non-smokers from the harms of passive smoking.

South Australia completely divested all state monies from the tobacco industry, including those of its government superannuation fund, setting best practice for its divestment policies.

Unfortunately, there is no action to prevent political donations by groups lobbying against tobacco control, and the Government has not adopted policies based on Article 5.3 of the FCTC to limit public health policy interference from the tobacco industry.

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

The ACT was the first State/Territory to divest from the tobacco industry, and the Minister of Health does not meet with tobacco companies. The ACT Government does not accept donations or sponsorship from tobacco companies or allied interest groups.

The ACT prohibits all point of sale advertising, and bans consumer reward schemes for tobacco products, and has further strong policies on tobacco sales (with bans on vending machines carrying tobacco products).

There are strong policies on protecting non-smokers from the harms of passive smoking.

The ACT Government is urged to increase its commitment to public education campaigns on smoking.

New South Wales

New South Wales is commended as the only jurisdiction with specific legislation prohibiting political donations by the tobacco industry. There has also been a decision to divest all direct and indirect tobacco investments across all government agencies.

There has been good progress on passive smoking in various settings, but while the *Tobacco Legislation Amendment Act 2012* prohibits smoking in a number of outdoor public settings, there is significant room for improvement, and the alfresco dining smoking ban planned for July 2015 has an unreasonably long lead time.

Investment by New South Wales in public education mass media campaigns has been substantially reduced in the past three years. This is disappointing, especially given the State's own evidence regarding the effectiveness of mass media campaigns in reducing and preventing smoking among adults and children.

Western Australia

Western Australia's social marketing funding has been maintained, ensuring sustained, effective mass media campaigns.

The City of Perth implemented a comprehensive smoke free policy in January 2013. There is good support for smoking cessation, healthy workplace programs and Indigenous health programs. Compliance surveys of sales to minors are regularly undertaken. Major parties do not accept political donations as a matter of policy.

Legislation prohibiting smoking in cars with children, smoking on patrolled beaches and children's playgrounds, and smoking in alfresco dining areas has been implemented, but a loophole allowing smoking in hotel beer gardens remains an inexplicable anomaly that should be amended.

Smoking cessation in prisons requires significant further support from administration.

Northern Territory

The Northern Territory deserves credit for its commitment to substantial Indigenous smoking projects and programs. The Northern Territory also merits high praise for its commitment to implement smoke free correctional facilities by 1 July 2013.

There is good legislation in areas such as point of sale advertising, and voluntary declaration of smoke free areas, together with increasing support for smoke-free measures.

There is also a comprehensive tobacco sales monitoring program to help inform future investment and policy direction.

Regrettably, the Northern Territory is the only jurisdiction where smoking in cars with children is still permitted; this should be urgently addressed.

Deeply concerning is a failure to protect public health policy from tobacco industry influence.

The Northern Territory continues to invest in the tobacco industry; its government superannuation funds invest in the tobacco industry; and there is no constraint on political donations from tobacco companies.