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MEDIA RELEASE: Immediate release

Australia falls further behind in tobacco control

Smoking rates continue to stagnate or increase in Australia, while falling faster than ever in many other countries. This was confirmed in the recent release of Queensland smoking rates which had not changed over the past two years (1). One in six Queensland adults, or 15.8% per cent of the population still smoke.

The trend in Queensland reflects the poor progress in other recent state surveys. Smoking in Western Australia has not declined since 2014 (2) and the most recent state surveys from NSW (3) and South Australia (4) show that smoking is increasing.

‘This is very worrying’ said Associate Professor Colin Mendelsohn, chairman of the [Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association](#) (ATHRA). ‘Smoking remains the leading modifiable cause of death and illness in Australia and we are clearly losing the battle to contain it.’

‘Australia was a world leader in tobacco control for many years, leading the way with innovative strategies. However, this has all changed and new strategies are now needed’ Dr Mendelsohn said.

According to Dr Joe Kosterich, Director of ATHRA, ‘The difference between Australia and other high-income countries is Australia’s ban on tobacco harm reduction strategies, ie the use of safer nicotine products like vaporisers (e-cigarettes) for smokers who are unable to quit. Of the 37 OECD countries there are only three that ban vaping, Australia, Japan and Mexico’. (see below)

Smoking rates are dropping faster than ever in many of these other countries. For example, the adult smoking rate in the US announced this week is now at a historic low of 14% (5) and in England it is 14.9% (6). There is good evidence that vaping is contributing to this rapid decline. According to the UK Royal College of Physicians, vaping is at least 95% less harmful than smoking. (7)

By comparison, the national adult smoking rate in Australia was 15.6% in 2016. (8)

The smoking rate in Norway fell by half from 22% to 11% between 2007-2017 due to the widespread uptake of Swedish snus, a low-risk, moist oral tobacco product, which is in effect banned in Australia. (9)

Heated tobacco products have led to a 25% fall in cigarette sales in Japan over the last two years. (10) These tobacco products are heated to release nicotine, but without combustion and are around 90% safer than smoking. However, they are also banned in Australia.

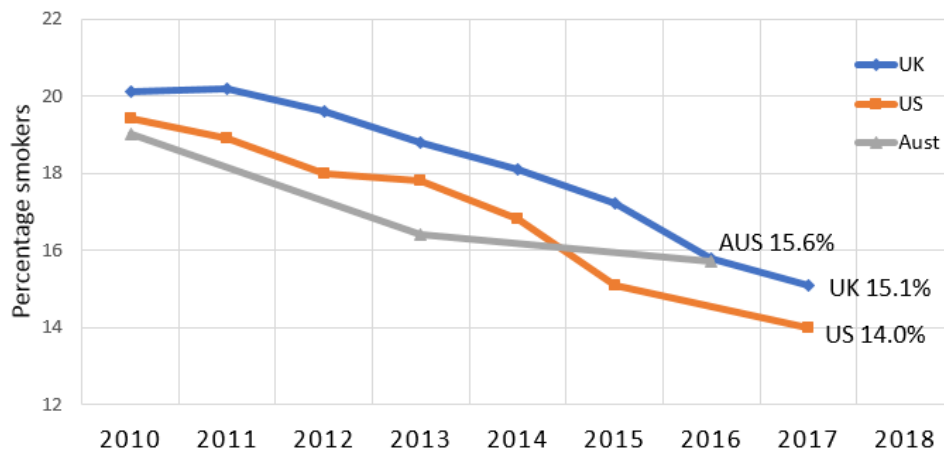
‘Australia is increasingly out of step with the rest of the world on tobacco harm reduction. Two out of every three smokers will die prematurely from smoking’ Dr Mendelsohn said. ‘We need to urgently make safer alternatives available for smokers who cannot quit. Not doing so is costing Australian lives.’

ENDS

Legal status of vaping in OECD countries

Not banned			Banned
Austria	Iceland	Portugal	Australia
Belgium	Ireland	Slovakia	Japan
Canada	Israel	Slovenia	Mexico
Chile	Italy	Spain	
Czech Republic	South Korea	Sweden	
Denmark	Latvia	Switzerland	
Estonia	Lithuania	Turkey	
Finland	Luxembourg	United Kingdom	
France	Netherlands	United States	
Germany	New Zealand		
Greece	Norway		
Hungary	Poland		

UK, US, Australia 18y+ smoking rates, 2010-2017



Data: UK Office of National Statistics | US: NHIS | Australia: NDSHS

Data: UK. Annual Population Survey, Office of National Statistics; US. National Health Interview Survey, CDC National Centre for Statistics; Australia. National Drug Strategy Household Survey, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Contact

Associate Professor Colin Mendelsohn

Chairman, Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association

M: 0415 976 783 | E: colin@athra.org.au

Dr Joe Kosterich

General practitioner, Board Member Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association

M: (04) 1799-8697 | E: joe@athra.org.au

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What is ATHRA?

Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association (ATHRA) is a health promotion charity registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission ABN 72 6222 11223. ATHRA was established to improve public health by raising awareness of tobacco harm reduction to reduce the devastating health effects of tobacco smoking in Australia.

ATHRA's aim is to provide evidence-based information on safer alternatives to smoking such as vaping, so smokers who want to quit can make informed choices. ATHRA is managed by the Board of Directors, which consists of four independent medical practitioners and one consumer representative.

Directors receive no financial reimbursement or other benefit from ATHRA. None of the directors have ever had any financial or commercial relationship with any electronic cigarette or tobacco company.

ATHRA is funded by donations from businesses and the general public. ATHRA does not accept donations from tobacco companies or their subsidiaries. ATHRA accepts donations from the vaping industry. All donations are untied and all spending is at the discretion of the ATHRA Board of Directors, in line with the written objectives of the organisation and our Constitution.

Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association

11 Carlotta Rd, Double Bay 2028
T: 0401 113 0372 E: colin@athra.org.au
W: www.athra.org.au (under construction)

ATHRA is registered as a charity with the
Australian Charities and Not-for-profits
Commission | ABN 72 6222 11223



Directors: A/Prof Colin Mendelsohn | Dr Alex Wodak AM | Dr Joe Kosterich | Dr Catherine Silsbury | Mr Stephen Elsom