
Cancer Council supports Turnbull tobacco tax

Consistency needed in tobacco, alcohol excise

Federal Opposition Leader Malcolm Turnbull should be commended for proposing a 12.5 per cent increase in tobacco tax in last night's budget reply speech, Cancer Council Australia said today.

Cancer Council Australia Chief Executive Officer, Professor Ian Olver, said while the Opposition's proposal was short of the 21 per cent increase in tobacco product prices through excise that Cancer Council had recommended to Treasury, Mr Turnbull was proposing a commendable step in the right direction.

Professor Olver said he hoped the Opposition's position indicated it was also prepared to re-think its support for the tax on pre-mixed drinks, which followed the same public health policy principle and had been shown to reduce alcohol consumption.

"Increasing the price of tobacco products through excise is the best measure available to government for encouraging people to quit smoking and discouraging young people from taking up smoking," he said.

"It is particularly effective for socially and economically disadvantaged people, who bear a disproportionate tobacco-related disease burden.

"Malcolm Turnbull's proposal would help to break the cycle of smoking, poverty and premature death, particularly if the additional revenue available through increased tobacco tax went to tailored programs to help disadvantaged people quit smoking."

Professor Olver said the principle of price control disincentive was also expected to work in the "alcopops" tax, with the only independent data available showing reduced net alcohol consumption had coincided with the tax.

"The risk of alcohol-related cancer is linked directly to the amount of alcohol you consume," he said.

"With data showing net alcohol consumption in Australia reduced in line with the 'alcopops' tax, the increased excise on pre-mixed drinks could contribute to minimising cancer risk in Australia on a population basis.

"Cancer Council Australia hopes the commendable leadership Mr Turnbull has shown on tobacco tax may translate to a similar view on the importance of supporting a tax on pre-mixed alcoholic drinks."

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