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Committee Secretariat
Health Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

By email: he@parliament.govt.nz

Tēnā koutou katoa

Smoke-free Environments (Prohibiting Smoking in Motor Vehicles Carrying Children) Amendment Bill

Thank you for giving The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners the opportunity to comment on the Smoke-free Environments (Prohibiting Smoking in Motor Vehicles Carrying Children) Amendment Bill.¹

Introduction to general practice and the College

Our kaupapa is to set and maintain education and quality standards for general practice and support our members to provide competent, equitable care to their patients. We do this to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequities.

GPs comprise almost 40 percent of New Zealand's specialist workforce and their professional body, The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners (the College), is the largest medical college in the country. The College has a commitment to embed the three principles (participation, partnership and protection) of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) across its work, and to achieving health equity in New Zealand.

Health equity is the absence of avoidable or remediable differences in health outcomes and access to health services among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically, or geographically (WHO). To achieve health equity, we advocate for:

- A greater focus on the social determinants of health (including labour, welfare, education, housing, and the environment).
- Funding and support to sustain the development of a GP workforce of sufficient capacity to meet population need for access to quality primary medical care, particularly in rural and high need areas.
- Sustained focus on measures to reduce smoking and to increase healthy food options for low-income families.
- Improved integration of primary, community, and secondary care health and social services which ensures the provision of high-quality services.
- Universally accessible free primary health care for children and low-income families, because health inequities begin early and compound over the life course.

¹ https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/bills-and-laws/bills-proposed-laws/document/BILL_89328/smoke-free-environments-prohibiting-smoking-in-motor-vehicles accessed 5/8/19

- A review of the funding model for primary care to ensure that resourcing is allocated equitably across diverse populations with differing needs.

Submission

The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners' 2012 position statement on Tobacco encouraged the Government to follow the lead of other countries by passing legislation to ban smoking in cars carrying children.² Consequently the College welcomes this legislative amendment which we consider will be a useful tool to assist in reducing the exposure of children to second-hand smoke.

The detrimental effects on health resulting from exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke are well known and significant.³ Furthermore, children who are exposed to second-hand smoke are more susceptible to harm than adults, and in addition, children traveling in motor vehicles with smokers have no control over whether they are exposed to this harm. It is therefore appropriate that legislative measures should be used in order to minimise the harm to individuals under the age of 18 years who travel in motor vehicles with smokers.

The 2012-2013 New Zealand Health Survey found that children who lived in the most deprived areas were four times more likely to be exposed to second-hand smoke in the car than children who lived in the least deprived areas.⁴

Financial penalties risk further disadvantaging this already disadvantaged group. The amendment itself concerns only the legislative changes, however, supporting documents⁵ propose that financial penalties should form part of a package of measures to reduce children's exposure to second-hand smoke, and that legislation should be combined with a public education/social marketing approach before and during implementation of the legislation. The College strongly recommends a public education /social marketing approach before financial penalties are enacted.

A phased implementation with police initially providing warnings and information on available smoking cessation assistance rather than imposing fines would provide a valuable opportunity to promote the culture change that is necessary. Information on how to access cessation support may well be received more positively during this phase than later when the information is accompanied by a fine.

We hope you find our submission helpful. Should you require any further information or clarification please contact the College's policy team at policy@rnzcgp.org.nz.

Yours sincerely

² *Tobacco position statement*. Accessed 5/8/19. <https://oldgp16.rnzcgp.org.nz/assets/New-website/Advocacy/Position-Statements/2012-RNZCGP-Tobacco-position-statement.pdf>

³ *Effects of second-hand smoke*. Accessed 6/8/19. <https://www.smokefree.org.nz/smoking-its-effects/second-hand-smoke>

⁴ *New Zealand Health Survey*. Accessed 5/8/19. <https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/tobacco-use-2012-13-new-zealand-health-survey-dec14-v2.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/ris-prohibiting-smoking-motor-vehicles-8feb19-redactd.pdf>



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