



Tobacco Sales to Minors

Access to cigarettes

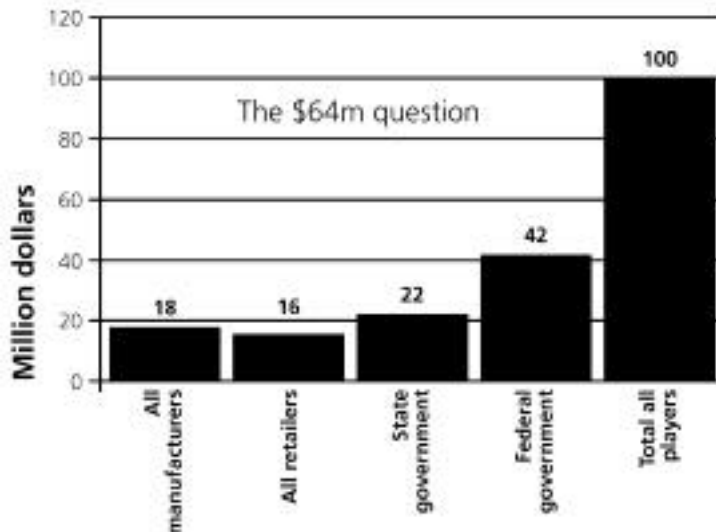
The sale of cigarettes is restricted to persons over 18 years of age in all Australian States and Territories by law. Ready access to cigarettes is a predictor of uptake of smoking. Surveys confirm that children obtain their cigarettes from retail outlets, vending machines, friends, siblings and parents^{1,2}.

The most recent survey on schoolchildren's smoking rates shows that around a quarter of Australian schoolchildren smoke³. The decision to take up smoking is generally made between the ages 12 and 16, with smoking prevalence among seniors mirroring that of smoking rates among adults. Seventy thousand children commence smoking each year⁴.

The 1996 national school survey (unpublished) indicates that in 1996 more than 336,000 Australian school children smoked a total of more than 370 million cigarettes. Taking into account current cigarette prices and tax rates, we estimate that this year, these same children will smoke more than \$100m worth of cigarettes⁵. Of this \$100m, more than \$64 m will end up in the hands of federal and state governments⁶.

Estimated revenue from school children smoking,

\$m, 1998/99 - to manufacturers, retailers, federal and state governments



Sources: Calculated with data from the 1996 *Secondary School Alcohol and Smoking Survey*, using the model of cigarette prices taxes and consumption developed by the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria; *Australian Retail Tobacconist* July 1998; Excise rates as specified in the *Excise Tariff Amendment Acts* Nos 3 and 5.

¹Hill D. Causes of smoking in children. In: Durston B, Jamrozik K. *Smoking and Health 1990 - the Global War*. Proceedings of the Seventh World Conference on Smoking and Health, 1-5 April 1990, Perth, Western Australia. Perth: Health Department of Western Australia, 1990: 205-209

²US Department of Health and Human Services. *Preventing Tobacco Use Among Young People: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, Georgia: US Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, National Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 1994.

³Hill D, White V, Segan C. Preliminary Report: Prevalence of cigarette smoking among Australian secondary school students in 1993. Melbourne: Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer, Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria, 1994.

⁴Armstrong BK, Daube MM, Shean RE. A smokefree Australia - our bicentenary resolution? [Editorial]. *Med J Aust* 1988; 149: 1-2.

⁵These figures relate only to school children and are hence extremely conservative. Smoking prevalence among children who are not in full-time education is known to be significantly higher.

⁶Calculated with data from the 1996 *Secondary School Alcohol and Smoking Survey*, using the model of cigarette prices taxes and consumption developed by the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria; *Australian Retail Tobacconist* July 1998; Excise rates as specified in the *Excise Tariff Amendment Acts* Nos 3 and 5.

It is a generally observed trend that the older the child the more likely they are to purchase their own cigarettes^{7,8}. The 1993 national survey shows that 20% of 12 year old children purchase their own cigarettes; a blatant violation of state and territory legislation which in most states restricts sale of tobacco to persons over 18 years of age⁹. A controlled study in Adelaide showed that 45% of children aged between 12 and 14 successfully purchased cigarettes themselves. The same study showed that children were successful on all occasions in obtaining cigarettes from vending machines¹⁰. A NSW survey estimated that "...illegal sales of cigarettes could be reduced by as much as 70% through the distribution of letters of warning to retail outlets known to have sold cigarettes to minors."¹¹

Strong evidence also comes from the US on the potential for sales-to-minors legislation to reduce children's access to tobacco. One American study showed that the sales of tobacco to minors decreased from 70% prior to the passage of legislation to 3% eighteen months after¹². Experimental smoking among children and adolescents halved and regular smoking fell from 16% to 5% in the two years following the introduction of legislation. Similar results are discernable in Australia where a West Australian program aimed at retailer education, reduced the number of retailers willing to sell tobacco to children from 89% to 29%. Some prosecutions were undertaken with the assistance of the Liquor and Gaming Policy and the Crown Law Prosecutors¹³.

⁷ National Health and Medical Research Council. Smoking habits of Australian schoolchildren. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1979.

⁸ White V, Hill D, Gardner G, Pain M. Cigarette and alcohol consumption among Australian secondary schoolchildren in 1987. Melbourne: Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer, Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria, 1990.

⁹ Hill DJ, White VM, Williams RM, Gardner GJ. Tobacco and alcohol use among Australian secondary school students in 1990. *Med J Aust* 1993; 158: 228-234.

¹⁰ Wakefield M, Carrangis J, Wilson D, Reynolds C. Illegal cigarette sales to children in South Australia. *Tobacco Control* 1992; 1: 114-117.

¹¹ Chapman S, King M, Andrews B, Markham P, Woodward S. Effects of publicity and a warning letter on illegal cigarette sales to minors. *Australian Journal of Public Health* 1994; 18: 39-42.

¹² Jason LA, Ji PY, Anes MD, Birkhead SH. Active enforcement of cigarette control laws in the prevention of cigarette sales to minors. *JAMA* 1991; 226: 3159-3161.

¹³ Health Department of Western Australia. Sales of cigarettes to children in WA [Preliminary report]. Perth: Health Promotion Services Branch, Health Department of Western Australia, 1994.

Unless otherwise stated the material and references included in this fact sheet have been extracted from; Winstanley M, Woodward S, Walker N. Tobacco in Australia: Facts and Issues 1995, Second edition published by the Victorian Smoking and Health Program, Australia (Quit Victoria), 1995.

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