

The positive and negative effects on banning smoking

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Almost 5000 people in the Australian state of Victoria die every year from some type of smoking-related illness. And very soon, 5000 venues will have to provide smoke-free areas under some of the toughest anti-smoking reforms in Australia. From September 1 this year, clubs, hotels, bingo halls and gaming venues including Crown Casino will have to provide a smoke-free alternative. The recent amendments to the Tobacco Bill in mid May come hot on the heels of the transition to smoke-free dining in last July.

The main gaming floor at Crown Casino and 533 gaming venues will be affected by this extension of smoke-free laws," said Health Minister John Thwaites, announcing the state wide Tobacco (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002. " Smoking is already banned in Victorian restaurants, cafes, hotel dining rooms and shopping centres and this next stage of reform is a logical step". Under the legislation before Parliament, smoking will be banned in the gaming area in single-room gaming venues only. In gaming venues with two or more rooms, smoking will be prohibited in the whole of the room containing pokies.

And the main gaming floor at Crown Casino, which houses a total of 350 tables and 2500 slots, will be smoke-free for the first time - along with six of the 11 public bar areas. Although Crown Casino has applied for a preliminary application for exemptions for VIP rooms, the decision is still too made. These areas are expected to attract substantial high-roller clientele in order to receive a waiver.

" The smoking restrictions on the casino will be tougher than other states but allow Crown to compete with interstate and international casinos in the high-

roller market," Mr Thwaites said. Based on information received, we are likely to approve exemptions to high-roller private salons, the VIP Mahogany Room and the VIP slots room which are not accessible to the general public. Crown is proposing to change the Teak Room to a private members-only room for substantial international High-roller clientele, in which case it is likely to be exempted. An update in Queensland smoking bans (as reported by Global Gaming Business Magazine 2003) includes; A ban on smoking in all indoor eating areas was introduced in March 2001, and came into effect on World No Tobacco Day, May 31 this year.

Conrad Jupiters Gold Coast Casino and the Conrad Treasury Casino in Brisbane enforced the ban from October 1, 2001 - eight months ahead of government legislation to reduce the impact of passive smoking. Conrad Jupiters General Manager, Grant Bowie, said management had decided to take a pro-active role by extending smoking-free areas in both its Gold Coast and Brisbane casinos. Mr Bowie said changing social attitudes as well as the impending legislation encouraged the move, and management would use the trial period before the legislation took effect to monitor customer and staff feedback.

I think it is accepted that there is a social desire to increase the smoke-free areas," said Mr Bowie. Health Minister Wendy Edmond applauded Conrad Jupiters for its early action, and noted that the casino's policy went beyond legislated restrictions by including sections of the gaming machine areas. Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union organiser, Lana Howcroft, said the casino's implementation of smoke-free areas was

fantastic. " I think it is a positive step and I would be hoping they would be extending it to the new high-rollers room as well," she said.

Under the legislation, premium gaming rooms in casinos, prisons and on-stage acts where actors smoke as part of the performance are exempt. Casinos and other gaming areas have also been going to extremes to make sure they are not going to get into any trouble with the law. On gaming site [http://www.gamblinglicenses.com/articlesFull.cfm?Articles_ID= 56](http://www.gamblinglicenses.com/articlesFull.cfm?Articles_ID=56) it reports that at Melbourne's Crown Casino, Croupiers have been wearing devices to measure chemical levels in the air around gaming tables as unions step up a push to ban smoking in hospitality work areas all over the country.

The tiny devices worn on croupiers' lapels measure the nicotine and carbon monoxide levels. Work Safe ordered the devices be used after action by the casino employees' health and safety representatives in July 2001. Work Cover said it will continue passive smoking monitoring at Crown Casino, despite test results indicating gaming staff are " satisfactorily completed" initial Work Cover requirements. But the casino's workers union and anti-smoking groups condemned the findings, vowing to continue the fight against passive smoking.

Quit chief executive, Todd Harper, said the test results were implausible considering the body of research about passive smoking. At the blackjack tables at Crown Casino, anti-smoking air curtains have been installed that blow curtains of fresh air between players and croupiers. This move is

designed to keep tobacco fumes away from non-smokers on either side of the cards. The air vents are set into a polished wooden curve panel around the perimeter of the curved blackjack tables.

Powerful fans below the upholstered playing surface send up a curtain of clean air that takes exhaled tobacco smoke in an arc, forward and up, over the croupier's head. Other ducts, set around the chip tray in front of the croupier, add to the shielding screen. The new smoking restrictions affect all venues that have gaming machines, as follows: In single room gaming venues, the 'gaming machine area', as defined under the Gaming Machine Control Act 1991, is required to be smoke-free, but other areas within the single room (such as a bar) are not required to be smoke-free.

In gaming venues with two rooms, the entire gaming room will be required to be smoke-free. In gaming venues with three or more operating rooms, occupiers are required to designate one operating room, in addition to their gaming room, as smoke-free. The term 'gaming room' means a room that contains gaming machines available for use. So far we have only talked about the banning of smoking; we haven't discussed what happens when these laws aren't enforced within establishments. Occupiers who permit smoking in an area that should be smoke-free and fail to display the 'no smoking' signs in smoke-free areas or premises.

The term 'occupier' in relation to an area or premises, means a person who appears to be of, or over, 16 years of age and who is, or appears to be, in control of the area or premises. It is the occupier of the premises (generally

the manager or owner) rather than the occupier of the area who is responsible for designating the smoke-free room. When enforcing the law Environmental Health Officers in local councils currently administer all provisions of the Tobacco Act. They will also be responsible for enforcing the smoking restrictions in licensed premises that have two or more perating rooms and in gaming and bingo venues. People who require help enforcing these laws or who are after extra information can contact Department of Human Services Tobacco Information Line (03) 9637 5657 Therefore we can see that places are going to efforts to make and insure their clubs and gaming areas are safe to their members and visitors.

Further passive smoking reforms were introduced on 1 September 2002. These reforms affect licensed premises (gaming and non-gaming venues), Crown Casino, bingo centres and other places where bingo is played and lastly that Environmental Health Officers in local councils enforce all provisions of the Tobacco Act.