

BCH POSITION STATEMENTS

Date: January 2018



Smoke Free Living

BCH Role

Ballarat Community Health is one of the leading agencies in the region to advocate for change in relation to supporting tobacco free living. We are a member of the Victorian Network of Smoke Free Healthcare Services, committed to the delivery of safe quality care and information in relation to tobacco use and nicotine dependence.

In addition to providing QUIT training programs and individual smoking cessation support, BCH staff supports the Alfred Health's "Start the Conversation" campaign by raising the topic of smoking with clients, its associated harms and offers early intervention support to individuals in need of assistance.

Background

The Grampians region has some of the highest smoking rates in Australia, significantly higher than the Victorian state average of 13.1%, with Ballarat rates currently at 15.% (Victorian Population Health Survey 2014).

Smoking reduction strategies have been shown to be effective, such as plain packaging strategies, media campaigns and more recently the Victorian State Government tobacco reforms, which have extended smoke free areas to outdoor dining and included new laws applicable to the sale, advertising and restricted places of use of e-cigarette products.

E-cigarettes are devices that heat and vaporise a liquid that is then inhaled, simulating the act of smoking. E-cigarettes can also be known as e-shisha, e-cigar, e-pipes, e-hookahs, vape pens, hookah pens and vape pipes. The liquid ingredients vary, however they typically contain chemicals, including solvents and flavouring agents, and may or may not contain nicotine.

Chop-chop is an untaxed illegal tobacco which is home grown. It is used by some as an alternative to other manufactured tobacco due to its comparative affordability, and common misunderstanding that it is less harmful to health since it is apparently more 'natural' and 'unadulterated,' not having been processed in the usual way.

Research has shown that some batches of chop-chop contain bulking agents such as twigs, raw cotton and grass clippings. Fungal (mould) spores have also been detected, which is of particular concern since they give rise to mycotoxins, including aflatoxin, a known carcinogen. Inhalation of and contact with fungi and their mycotoxins can cause a range of adverse responses in the liver,

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kidneys and skin, and cause illnesses including allergic reactions, chronic bronchitis, asthma and lung diseases.(Cancer Council Victoria)

Key Messages

- Tobacco smoking remains the leading preventable cause of death and disease in Australia (Cancer Council Australia).
- Smoking leads to a wide range of diseases including many types of cancer, heart disease and stroke, chest and lung illnesses and stomach ulcers. It claims the lives of 15,500 Australians every year (Cancer Council Australia).
- A range of smoking reduction strategies have been shown to be effective, including smoking cessation services in supporting people to quit.
- Despite progress being made in reducing smoking rates, targeted strategies are needed for particular groups which include individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and particular very vulnerable, high risk groups including Indigenous Australians, people with a disability, homeless people and people with mental illness (VicHealth, 2016; Australia Institute of Health and Welfare, 2016).
- Ballarat Community Health is committed to supporting the Alfred Health's "Start the Conversation" campaign, building capacity with staff to raise the topic of smoking with clients, its associated harms and offer QUIT support to individuals in need of assistance.
- Chop chop poses a significant health risk and can cause a range of illnesses, including allergic reactions and lung disease.

In response to e-cigarettes and e-cigarette reforms, August 2017

- E-cigarettes are a relatively new product, and much remains unknown about the potential harms they may cause (Better Health Channel & State of Victoria 2017).
- The sale, use and possession of e-cigarette products containing nicotine is banned under Victorian drugs and poisons legislation.
- Adults can purchase non-nicotine e-cigarettes, and they can be used in areas where smoking is not banned.
- Although e-cigarettes are marketed as quit aids or a 'safe alternative' to smoking tobacco, they have not been proven to be safe or an effective smoking cessation aid and are not promoted or supported by BCH.

Ballarat Community Health support the e-cigarette reforms introduced by the Victorian Government in 2017, which aim to protect children and young people from accessing and using e-cigarettes, by regulating the display, advertising and sale of ALL e-cigarette products in the same way as it does tobacco products.

BCH Tobacco Free Living Services:

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Ballarat Community Health delivers health promotion (including advocating for tobacco free living), QUIT training and information sessions to workplaces and schools (group programs) and individual smoking cessation support to people living in Ballarat and surrounding areas.

For more information contact:

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References:

- Alfred Health, & State Government of Victoria. (2017). Start the Conversation. Retrieved from <http://starttheconversation.org.au/>
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