



CLUBS VICTORIA INC.

URGENT MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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ClubsVIC criticises the Victorian government's announcement of total smoking bans

ClubsVIC, the umbrella organisation for licensed community clubs in the state, today criticised the Victorian government's announcement of total smoking bans in 2005.

Executive Director, Margaret Kearney, said that clubs are community assets and meeting places, they are one of the last bastions of "connectiveness" in society. Totally banning smoking in the clubs will alienate many people for whom the club is their lifeline or whole way of life. It is where they play sport, interact with friends and stay vital. For these people, banning smoking in their club becomes a punishment for their smoking addiction. The ban will not stop these people smoking, it will stop them attending their clubs and being active members of their community. Instead these people will stay home where they can smoke and lose social contact.

Clubs want to be able to accommodate all their patrons safely. Smoking is not illegal, and clubs should be allowed to provide safe smoking spaces within their confines, - safe for staff and safe for non-smoking members & guests. "It is demonstrably possible to provide safe smoking areas, and clubs should be at liberty to provide such areas for their members & guests" said Margaret Kearney.

This ban will not result in less smoking. It will result in less people attending clubs and less jobs in the licensed hospitality industry in Victoria. The results from New York and Ireland show this. In New York the economic impact has been such that the law has been wound back to allow for exemptions for economic hardship.

"I am at a loss to understand what figures the social-engineers are reading when they say that smoking bans have a positive impact on business" says Ms Kearney said, "the reality is that many businesses are now closed and many jobs have been lost because of smoking bans. The Victorian smoke-free gaming laws demonstrate this."

The licensed hospitality industry and its employees, and community clubs in particular, have been sacrificed in this campaign. ClubsVIC believes that a collaborative approach which provides for safety and choice will lead to the best outcomes for smokers, workers and patrons.

ClubsVIC will be working with the government through the consultation period to provide clubs with the opportunity to safely accommodate their smoking members & guests indoors, and to protect their workers.

ENDS

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