

## Community Support for Smoke-free Cars Legislation

### Findings from new South Australian research

#### Introduction

On 31 May 2007, South Australia was the first jurisdiction in Australia to implement legislation banning smoking in cars when children under the age of 16 years are present.

#### Methodology

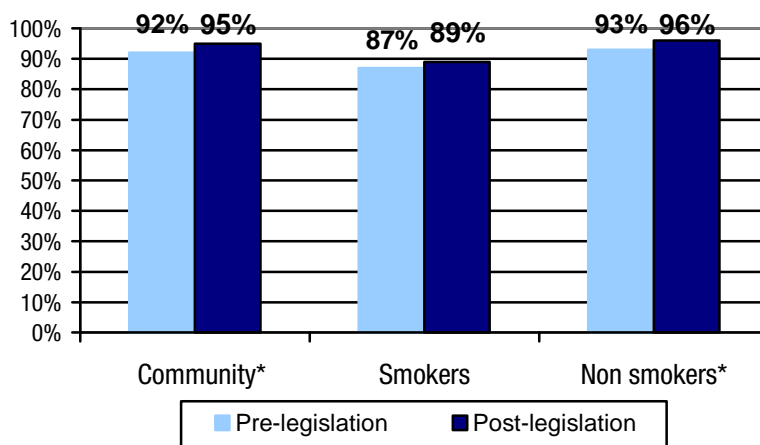
Two random representative telephone surveys were conducted with the SA community to assess community support prior to the legislation and 10-12 months post-legislation. The impact on smoking and awareness post-legislation was also assessed. The pre-legislation cross-sectional survey conducted in March-April 2007 included a sample of 1975 South Australian adults (aged 18 years and over) and the post-legislation cross-sectional survey was conducted with 1877 South Australian adults (aged 18 years and over) in March-May 2008.

#### Results

##### a) Community Support

Overall, community support for the laws was high at 92% pre-legislation. Community support increased significantly to 95% post-legislation. Support increased significantly post-legislation among non-smokers and slightly among smokers however this difference was non-significant.

**Figure 1:** Community support for banning smoking in cars when children under the age of 16 are present pre and post the ban\*



\* Significant chi-square at  $p < 0.05$

## b) Awareness of the laws (post legislation)

Overall post-legislation, 75% of the community (78% of smokers and 74% of non-smokers) reported (prompted) that they were aware that on 'the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 2007 a law about smoke-free cars was passed in South Australia'. When probed further about the specific aspects of the legislation, 44% of the community specified that the law was about banning smoking in cars with children present, a further 25% correctly articulated that the law related to the age of the child being under 16 years and 7% reported that the law generally banned smoking in cars. The remaining 24% did not know any specifics or incorrectly articulated the ban.

## c) Impact of the legislation on smokers

Current smokers (n=333) were also asked how the legislation may have affected their smoking behaviour. As shown by Table 1, the majority reported it would make no difference to their consumption; however 13% reported that the ban may encourage them to smoke less cigarettes overall. In addition, the majority reported it would make no difference to their likelihood of quitting, however 9% reported it would make them more likely to quit altogether. Overall, 16% of smokers reported that the ban may encourage them to smoke less cigarettes overall or to quit altogether.

**Table 1:** Impact of the legislation on smokers

<b>Effect of the ban on consumption</b>	<b>Proportion (%) n=333</b>
More likely to smoke less overall	13
More likely to smoke more overall	0
Would make no difference	86
Don't know/refused	1
<b>Effect of the ban on quitting</b>	<b>Proportion (%) n=333</b>
More likely to quit altogether	9
Less likely to quit altogether	1
Has made no difference	89
Don't know/refused	1

## Conclusions and implications for policy

Overall, banning smoking in cars with children under the age of 16 present was popular with the South Australian community prior to and post the legislation implementation. Awareness post-legislation was high among both smokers and non smokers. In addition, whilst the primary aim of the legislation is to protect children from the harmful effects of passive smoking, the present results also indicate that the law may have helped smokers to reduce their consumption and may help some smokers to quit smoking.

## Data dissemination strategy

The Cancer Council South Australia is planning to jointly release these findings with the Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse on 31 May World No Tobacco Day 2008. The Cancer Council Australia may also use these findings to encourage other jurisdictions to adopt similar legislation. A peer-reviewed publication is currently being drafted.