

Why e-cigarettes should be legalised

E-cigarettes have been taking a bit of a bashing around Asia and the rest of the world, with successive governments simply banning them without consultation some of these bans are the result of an ignorance of the technology. To Hong Kong's credit the Legislative Council has bucked the trend and at least decided to postpone any decision until a consultation has occurred.

The benefits e-cigarettes offer are often being overlooked. The biggest of these benefits is the harm reduction. A traditional cigarette is harmful because of the carcinogens given off when tobacco is burnt. The nicotine hit is why most smokers smoke, so if there was a way of still getting the nicotine hit but without the negative health implications surely that is something both the government and smokers would be interested in. We must also remember that these health benefits would not simply help the smoker, but also the countless number of non-smokers who suffer the effects of 2nd hand smoking.

Taking governments at face value can often be fraught with danger, though one would think that when they claim that the high taxes on traditional cigarettes are in order to deter people from smoking that they are being honest. Now, obviously, the tax revenues collected from smokers when they buy cigarettes goes towards funding the extra cost of healthcare that results from the statistic that 50% or more of smokers will die of a smoking related illness.

E-cigarettes are able to reduce the negative health consequences associated with traditional cigarettes because they do not burn anything. In fact they vaporise a liquid that contains nicotine, this gives smokers the chance to still get the instant hit whilst having none of the negative side effects associated with the burning of tobacco. Scientists have shown that e-cigarette use is 95+% less harmful than smoking cigarettes.

Even leading anti-smoking lobbyists in Europe including the likes of ASH in the UK are calling on governments to legalise e-cigarettes. They argue that a failure to do so will result in millions of death from traditional smoking.

The UK has really led the way on this issue and I believe it is time for Australia to follow suit. Not simply to improve the health of smokers, but also for all of the non-smokers who suffer because e-cigarettes are not legal. When even anti-smoking lobbyists are calling for e-cigarettes to be legalised it is time for governments to seriously review their policy stance for these products.

With e-cigarettes not being legal at present the only safe assumption to make is that the tobacco companies' money is still too much of a powerful lure to resist.

