

SMOKING IN PUBLIC PLACES

Statement by Minister for Health

MR R.C. KUCERA (Yokine - Minister for Health) [9.15 am]: On 12 January 1999, the Health Amendment Act 1998 received the royal assent. That Act amended the Health Act 1991 to create part IXB, "Smoking in enclosed public places", and enable the creation of associated regulations. The regulations to restrict smoking in enclosed public places came into operation on 29 March 1999. The Act and the regulations allow for specific exemptions for hotels, taverns and other licensed premises, including licensed restaurants, nightclubs or cabarets and the Burswood International Resort Casino. These exemptions permit smoking in areas of public places in accordance with specific conditions.

It is a requirement under section 289I of the Act that I carry out a review of the operation and effectiveness of part IXB and the regulations as soon as practicable after the expiry of three years from the commencement of the Health Amendment Act. A report based on the review recommending further steps to be taken to achieve smoke-free enclosed public places is to be laid before each House of Parliament as soon as practicable after the report is prepared, and in any event not later than four years after the commencement of the Health Amendment Act. Pursuant to the legislative requirements, I approved the commencement of the review in January 2002. Public submissions were requested through newspaper advertisements in *The West Australian* and regional newspapers. A discussion paper was also made available to the public on request or via the Department of Health's web site. The closing date for public submissions was 31 July 2002. I am advised that a total of 72 submissions were received from individuals and key stakeholder organisations. Just over half those submissions were made by members of the public.

Given the level of community interest in this issue, the Government was keen to ensure a high level of consultation with the public, industry and health professionals throughout the review. This issue has the capacity to generate impassioned views. However, the Government remains committed to reducing smoking, which causes approximately 1 500 deaths each year in Western Australia. As a demonstration of the Government's commitment, I recently launched a new campaign urging 18 to 24-year-olds to quit smoking. One-third of people in this age group smoke and many do not listen to the traditional health promotion messages about the dangers of smoking. It is well documented that smoking among this age group is higher than among other adults, with 30 per cent of females and 36 per cent of males smoking. If these young adults continue to smoke regularly, one out of every two will be killed by his or her habit. As we well know, the consequences of smoking are not simply about the detrimental health effects suffered directly by the smoker. The issue of passive smoking is never far from the media spotlight. This is one public health issue that traverses many areas of our working and recreational environments. Indeed, as recently as last week we saw the unprecedented move of the Family Court of Western Australia to tackle this issue.

The issue of smoking in enclosed public places and the impact of legislation to regulate the practice requires substantial consideration by the Government. I advise the House that the review process has progressed extremely well. When the Government has given the review its full consideration I will table a report based on the review. This will occur as soon as practicable in the new year.