

## MEDIA RELEASE

### MAJORITY REJECT INCREASE IN SMOKING AGE

**25 FEBRUARY, 2016:** A survey of some 1,000 Tasmanians has found the vast majority, some three quarters or 75 per cent, reject a call for increasing the smoking age.

The survey found that 76 per cent of the community would prefer to see better education and harm reduction measures to reduce smoking rates.

Russell Zimmerman, Executive Director of the Australian Retailers Association (ARA), said the results highlight that the Tasmanian population understands that better outcomes would be achieved through proper education that avoids unnecessary confusion for retailers and the community alike.

“Although the idea may seem positive in a vacuum, the complicated logistics of the proposal make it simply unworkable,” said Mr Zimmerman.

“Tasmanians can see that over restriction and prohibition is not necessarily a positive direction to be moving in. It is clear they would overwhelmingly prefer better education and more research into why people start smoking in the first place.”

The online survey of 1,000 Tasmanians was undertaken in the last fortnight and conducted by the STW Group, one of Australia’s largest marketing and communications organisations. The survey and spoke to an electorally and demographically representative group of adults throughout the state.

When asked ‘to what extent do you agree or disagree that the age of majority (i.e. at 18 years, considered an adult) which is also the age of access to alcohol, gambling, voting etc. should also equally apply across products such as tobacco’, 75 per cent of respondents either strongly agree or somewhat agree.

In addition, respondents were asked, ‘In light of the State Governments’ proposed increase to the smoking age, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement – I would prefer to see better education and harm reduction measures to reduce smoking rates’, 76 per cent either strongly or somewhat agree.

Mr Zimmerman said in the last week he has seen criticism of the consultation process on the issue from a number of groups as diverse as the Tasmanian Small Business Council and the Royal Flying Doctors Services.

“In the last few days, both Tobacco Free Tasmania and author of the Smoke Free Generation Bill, Ivan Dean, have rejected the proposal to increase the smoking age,” Mr Zimmerman said.

“On top of this, the hospitality industry has highlighted how difficult this proposal will be to enforce.

“The ARA is in full support of a healthy lifestyle, however, this must be achieved in a way that is practical for both retailers and consumers. This survey backs up the ARA’s view that an increase in the smoking age for Tasmanians is not a practical proposal,” Mr Zimmerman said.



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For interview opportunities with ARA Executive Director, Russell Zimmerman, call the ARA Media team on 0439 612 556 or email [media@retail.org.au](mailto:media@retail.org.au).

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#### **About the Australian Retailers Association:**

Founded in 1903, the Australian Retailers Association (ARA) is the retail industry's peak representative body representing Australia's \$300 billion sector, which employs more than 1.2 million people. The ARA works to ensure retail success by informing, protecting, advocating, educating and saving money for its 5,000 independent and national retail members throughout Australia. For more information, visit [www.retail.org.au](http://www.retail.org.au) or call 1300 368 041.