

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2015 - 2016, 10 February 2016

Ref No: SQ16-000239

OUTCOME: 1 - Population Health

Topic: Smoking Rates

Type of Question: Hansard Page 131, 10 February 2016

Senator: Leyonhjelm, David

Question:

The National Drug Strategy Household Survey is perhaps, I would have thought, the best indicator of smoking levels because, as you say, it is not based just on clearances. Clearance is just one measure. You would expect it to be reliable because it captures not only the legal tobacco market but also the illegal tobacco market. Whatever people think, if they are smoking tobacco, it should capture it. We have looked at the figures since 1991 and there is an almost straight line decline in smoking from 1991 to the period when the most recent data is available, which is 2013. There is absolutely no substantial blips that I can attribute to any particular policy over that period.

a) Do you have any evidence to contradict that?

b) What I am looking for on notice is what contradicts my graphing of the household drug survey showing a straight line decline since 1991.

Answer:

The decline in prevalence reported by the National Drug Strategy Household Survey is influenced by the combined impact of tobacco control measures implemented over time.

The expert analysis of the Roy Morgan smoking prevalence data published on 26 February 2016 as an appendix to the Post-Implementation Review of the tobacco plain packaging measure concluded 'The evidence shows that the 2012 packaging changes are succeeding in reducing smoking prevalence beyond trend. In terms of order of magnitude, smoking prevalence is 0.55 percentage points lower over the period December 2012 to September 2015 than it would have been without the packaging changes.' The analysis indicates there has been an overall decline in smoking prevalence in Australia over the last fifteen years and the decline in prevalence has accelerated in recent years, following the 2012 packaging changes (plain packaging and enlarged graphic health warnings).