



MEDIA RELEASE

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HARSH SMOKE FREE AMBITIONS SHOULD BE AVOIDED

The Australian Hotels Association (SA) has welcomed the opportunity to respond to the Government's discussion paper on 'smoke free outdoor eating and drinking areas'.

General Manager of the Association, Ian Horne said he is "pleased that the Minister has chosen a consultative pathway rather than to simply impose quite severe restrictions on an industry that is increasingly commercially fragile".

"The reality is that SA hotels and similar places have led the way in innovative outdoor smoking and non-smoking areas," Mr. Horne said.

"The industry has already responded with all new outdoor facilities, recognising a balance between the needs of their smoking and non-smoking patrons".

"The discussion paper however, grossly underestimates the cost of smoking bans introduced in November 2007 quoting a net cost of just \$10.7 million over 5 years. It cost the hotel industry alone well in excess of \$40m in the first full year.

"Further, the discussion paper claims 'a large body of evidence' to suggest no reduction to business activity". We do not know of any such evidence, on the contrary the impact has been significant."

"The introduction of a ban on outdoor smoking from November 2007 has been a great success, not because of heavy handed policing or threats of heavy sanctions but because the industry and its customers actually implemented the transition in a co-operative manner" he said.

"Further, the industry responded to the challenge by investing hundreds of millions in smoking and non-smoking facilities – many of them award winning. They made those significant investments in good faith".

"The industry track record on accommodating all interests is excellent. Harsh deadlines, complete bans and unreasonable restrictions will simply damage the industry, its capacity to continue to re-invest and ultimately jobs it generates."

However, the AHA|SA nevertheless welcomes this consultative approach.

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