



Media release: 19 March 2009

## Smoking Bans for Mental Health Patients Wrong

'In mental health units throughout Australia, around 80% of mental health patients smoke. These units are those patients' homes. It is unfair to ban something in their homes that is permitted in the homes of all other citizens, just because they are sick and dependent', said JA coordinator Brett Collins.

'Clinical studies have shown such bans are counterproductive', said JA coordinator Michael Poynder.

'Researchers have found that where bans have been imposed, most patient's return to smoking as soon as they leave the units (*Australia and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, May 2007*)', he said.

'They have also found that where smoking bans have been introduced, voluntary patient admissions to mental health units have dropped by over 15% (*The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry Nov 2008*)', he also said.

A leading international expert on the topic, Professor Steve Kisely, said that it is essential that patients themselves voluntarily adopt such programs for effective smoking cessation programs to work.

He said '*the motivation to change theory emphasises that meaningful change will only occur when the patient has moved through the pre-contemplative, contemplative and planning stages through to the action stage*'. 'Importantly, the NSW Health Quitline smoking intervention guide published by NSW Health says exactly the same thing. Why then are they going against their own guidelines and forcing this group to quit?' asks Mr Poynder.

Mr Collins pointed out that not only are such bans ineffective but they also significantly raise the stress levels in mental health units for patients, nurses and doctors alike. 'The problem is so serious that the Western Australian government, which imposed smoking bans in these units some years ago, is now actively considering lifting the bans' he said.

'JA is so concerned about this issue that we have facilitated the formation of the 'Right to Choose Alliance'. Details of its campaign and research materials appear on its website, [www.righttochoosealliance.com.au](http://www.righttochoosealliance.com.au)' Mr Poynder said.

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