

## Science-based law reform could help Australian smokers leave cigarettes behind

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- *New survey shows a majority of Australians believe science can solve critical challenges and want governments to consider science in decision making.*

The Australian Government must put science ahead of ideology and embrace evidence-based research and developments if it wants smokers to transition away from cigarettes.

However, the government continues to make it harder for Australia's three million smokers and vapers to access smoke-free alternatives than cigarettes. This is despite numerous studies showing that scientifically substantiated smoke-free products that do not generate smoke, while not risk-free, are a much better alternative for adult smokers who do not quit cigarettes.

The Australian government's stance on smoke-free products is increasingly at odds with other countries, including the UK, US, New Zealand and in the European Union where smoke-free alternatives like e-cigarettes and heated tobacco devices are regulated and legally available.

And according to new research released by Philip Morris International (PMI), 87 per cent of Australians want governments to ensure the latest scientific developments and studies are taken into account in policy making.

The findings from an independent survey, conducted by Povaddo for PMI, of over 19,000 adults across 19 countries and territories including Australia, show how people want governments, public authorities, and private businesses to prioritize science and facts when tackling critical issues.

The insights – published as part of a white paper *"In Support of the Primacy of Science"* – reveal that faith in science is high, with 80 per cent of people surveyed in Australia hopeful that advances in science will solve many of society's biggest problems.

Supporting this view, there is also strong interest in businesses prioritizing science, with 86 per cent of respondents saying it is important to them that businesses invest continually in science to improve their products.

Despite these positive attitudes, 51 per cent of respondents believe that society does not place enough importance on science. Given the diverging opinions, the white paper challenges the need for regulators to place greater focus on science to inform policy decisions, with a third of respondents in Australia believing that their "government does a poor job ensuring science and evidence are included in the decision-making process."

"Science can help make significant strides in our collective efforts to address the world's most pressing problems" said Dr. Moira Gilchrist, vice president for Strategic & Scientific Communications at PMI.

"Unfortunately, governments and broader society have yet to embrace science at its fullest potential, as this global survey shows. Ensuring facts and evidence are given greater prominence in policymaking—over ideology, politics, and unsubstantiated beliefs—will help match the public's expectations for science to sit at the heart of decisions impacting them and their future."

The survey also reveals that people's access to accurate scientific information is far from assured today, with 37 per cent of Australian respondents indicating that they find it difficult to access reliable information about scientific developments and relevant studies.

"This finding is alarming and sends a clear signal across business, media, and government that accurately communicating scientific information should remain an important priority," added Dr. Gilchrist. "When reliable



scientific information is in short supply, misinformation, wild guesses, and hearsay can take more space and significantly hamper people's ability to make informed decisions."

The importance of embracing science is particularly relevant for Australia in light of the current debate about the regulation of smoke-free alternatives to cigarettes.

While the best thing any smoker can do is quit tobacco and nicotine altogether, the reality is that many adult smokers in Australia will continue to smoke cigarettes – one of the most harmful ways to consume nicotine – unless the government rethinks its tobacco control policy.

It's time for the policy makers, regulators and health authorities to look at the science and support common sense, science-based regulations for smoke-free alternatives that can help smokers leave cigarettes behind.

### **Survey Methodology**

Povaddo conducted this online survey on behalf of PMI between June 25 and July 8, 2020. The survey was fielded among 19,100 general population adults ages 21 and older in 19 countries and territories: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Germany, Hong Kong, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Vietnam. For the overall sample, there is a margin of error of +/- 0.72% at the 95% confidence interval.

To read the "In Support of the Primacy of Science" paper, visit <https://www.pmi.com/primacyofscience>.

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