



# GUIDE FOR CHURCHES: SMOKE-FREE POLICY

## **Purpose of this guide:**

Recent changes to legislation in Victoria mean that your church has a legal responsibility to provide a safe and healthy environment for those who attend church programs and activities, including the provision of a smoke free environment.

This guide is to assist you to understand which parts of the legislation are relevant to churches and provides a sample wording for writing a smoke-free policy for your church.

The aspects of the anti-smoking laws that significantly affect all churches in Victoria are:

- Smoking is banned in enclosed workplaces
- Smoking is prohibited within 10 metres of playgrounds
- Smoking is prohibited in cars carrying persons under 18 years of age

## **Smoking is banned in all enclosed workplaces:**

The Victorian Tobacco Act 1987 makes it illegal to smoke in any enclosed workplace. This means that smoking is *not allowed* inside any building used for church activities, as a church is considered a workplace.

Everyone who works in or visits a church building is required to abide by the smoking ban including employers, employees, volunteers, members and visitors.

Under an amendment to Victoria's anti-smoking laws, smoking is now prohibited within 4 metres of the entrance to many public buildings across the state. The ban covers the entrances to all children's indoor play centres, public hospitals and health centres, childcare centres, kindergartens and schools, and many State Government buildings.

If your church operates a ministry or meets it any of these environments, you are also bound by this law.

Whilst the legislation does not specify the distance from entrances to general church buildings, the 4 metre ban is a good rule of thumb to adopt in your church policy.

## **Designated Outdoor Smoking Areas:**

Your church policy should specify whether or not smoking is permitted in a designated outdoor smoking area (DOSA) on the property or in open-air car parks.

Legally this is allowed as long as the DOSA is not in an enclosed building or within 10 metres of a playground.

It is a matter for your church to decide on, taking into account the practical and cultural aspects of your church property and community.



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## **Signage:**

Churches are not required by law to display 'No Smoking' signs, however, it is recommended that such signs are displayed to ensure that employees and visitors are aware of where smoking bans apply.

## **Smoking is prohibited within 10 metres of playgrounds:**

By law, smoking is banned within 10 metres (about two car lengths) of all children's playground equipment in outdoor public places in Victoria.

Children's playground equipment may include an individual piece of equipment or clusters of equipment, such as climbing frames, swings and slides.

## **Smoking is prohibited in cars carrying persons under 18 years of age in Victoria:**

Many church activities and programs involve the transportation of others in both private and commercial vehicles.

It is illegal to smoke in a motor vehicle if a person under 18 is present.

This ban includes whether the car is moving or not, whether the windows are open or closed, and whether the roof is down or not.

## **Smoke-free Policy:**

It is recommended that all churches adopt a smoke-free policy. This policy should be displayed at your venue, included in property hire agreements and communicated to the church community.

Sample policy wording Option 1:

*Sample Baptist Church is a smoke-free venue. Smoking is not permitted in or on church property. Where the church property adjoins public property, please note that smoking is not permitted within 4 metres of any church building entrance or within 10 metres of the playground.*

Sample policy wording Option 2:

*Sample Baptist Church is a smoke-free venue. Smoking is not permitted in or on church property except in the designated outdoor smoking area located at \_\_\_\_\_.*  
*Where the church property adjoins public property, please note that smoking is not permitted within 4 metres of any church building entrance or within 10 metres of the playground.*

**For more information including factsheets, legislation, posters, signs and other resources visit  
[www.health.vic.gov.au/tobaccoreforms](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/tobaccoreforms) or [www.quit.org.au](http://www.quit.org.au).**