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## **New study finds 'Duty free' cigarettes for Australian Defence Forces contributes to high smoking rates and poor health among military personnel**

A study of smoking among Australian Defence Force personnel has found significant increases in smoking rates associated with overseas deployment.

Researchers at the Centre for Military and Veterans Health, and the University of Newcastle found that nearly two-thirds (63%) of ADF personnel who were current or former smokers reported that they increased the number of cigarettes they smoked during overseas deployment for reasons that included boredom, stress, workload and the lower cost of cigarettes.

The study also found that while smoking in the armed forces was roughly equivalent to the general community overall, there was a higher proportion of smokers among 20-29 year olds in the ADF than among the civilian population.

The health effects of smoking on the sample of primarily young men and women involved in physically demanding duties was apparent according to the study, and smokers were more likely to report fatigue, shortness of breath, wheezing and persistent cough.

Study recommendations to decrease smoking rates in the ADF include changes to routines that lead to boredom and stress, limiting availability of low cost cigarettes by ending access to duty-free cigarettes, and enforcing bans on smoking in designated no-smoking areas. The last two recommendations are particularly relevant to the Navy, where smoking on ships is common, duty-

free cigarettes are readily available, and smoking rates are the highest of the three main branches of the ADF.

Anne Jones, Chief Executive Officer of ASH Australia said that “it was overdue for government to end duty free cigarettes for both overseas travellers and our defence forces.”

Jones added that “eliminating access to duty-free cigarettes for international travellers, both Australian and non-Australian, was recommended in the recent Henry Review of taxation.”

The federal government has stated only that it will further consider the recommendation to end sales of duty -free cigarettes.

Such policy is already in place in Singapore, set to come into effect in Hong Kong from 1 August 2010, and there are no duty-free concessions for travel within the European Union.

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**Release details:**

Barton CA, McGuire A, Waller M, Treloar SA, McClintock C, McFarlane AC, D’Este C. Smoking Prevalence, Its Determinants and Short-Term Health Implications in the Australian Defence Force. *Military Medicine* 2010;175(4):267-72.

**Australia’s Future Tax System (The Henry Review)**

[http://taxreview.treasury.gov.au/content/Content.aspx?doc=html/pubs\\_reports.htm](http://taxreview.treasury.gov.au/content/Content.aspx?doc=html/pubs_reports.htm)

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