Austalian Hotels Association, representing licensed premises and some restaurants. Information from Healthy Buildings International, an organisation with strong ties to the tobacco industry, was much in evidence.

When the ACT Government proposed its legislation, it did so in the belief that it was not a matter of time before other jurisdictions would adopt a legislative basis for smoke-free public places. Whether, when, and how this happens will depend on the success of the Australian public health community in presenting the issues in a way that is informative and persuasive to the media, the public, and elected representatives.

MARGO GOODIN
Department of Health and Consumer Affairs
Australian Capital Territory
Canberra ACT 2601 Australia

Adolescent use of cigarette vending machines

To the Editor - Public health officials have focused attention on the nature and extent of youth access to tobacco products in the United States. Studies have clearly shown that minors can purchase cigarettes unfettered. While model legislation calls for comprehensive measures to thwart youth access to tobacco, many communities have initially focused on regulating cigarette vending machines.

Tobacco control advocates, as well as the tobacco industry and retailers, recognise that a small percentage of youth tobacco sales is through vending machines. However, vending machines should be cause for concern because of their ubiquitous nature. A highly publicised mail intercept survey commissioned by the National Automotive Merchandising Association (NAMA) found that teenagers (13-17 years old) generally used over-the-counter sources for purchasing cigarettes. In the Pennsylvania tobacco survey for students, which was conducted for the Pennsylvania Department of Health. Using a 121 item self-completed questionnaire, administered in a classroom setting, this research aimed to collect baseline data about youth behaviour patterns and attitudes about cigarettes and smokeless tobacco. These students came from a stratified random sample of 371 public and non-public schools. Care was given to the proportional representation of the geographic, ethnic, gender, economic, and grade composition of the state. A total of 60778 students was surveyed, including a random sample of 25 of the Pennsylvania tobacco survey for students, which was conducted for the Pennsylvania Department of Health. Of the 121 item self-completed questionnaire, administered in a classroom setting, this research aimed to collect baseline data about youth behaviour patterns and attitudes about cigarettes and smokeless tobacco. These students came from a stratified random sample of 371 public and non-public schools. Care was given to the proportional representation of the geographic, ethnic, gender, economic, and grade composition of the state. A total of 60778 students was surveyed, including a random sample of 25 of the Pennsylvania tobacco survey for students, which was conducted for the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

Son of Premier

To the Editor - In 1988, the RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company (RJ) introduced a unique cigarette product called Premier. This product was unique because, unlike conventional cigarettes, Premier heated rather than burned tobacco, thereby significantly reducing tar yields. In October 1988, RJ began test marketing Premier in two American cities (Phoenix, Arizona, and St Louis, Missouri). However, it did not sell well in these cities and was removed from the market in February 1989.

The concept of a smokeless tobacco product, however, did not die with Premier. On 27 November 1994, a New York Times article revealed that RJ was testing a second generation of "smoking products called Eclipse. Like Premier, Eclipse heats rather than burns tobacco, but is designed somewhat differently. RJ has been conducting consumer tests of Eclipse in eight different American cities, including Buffalo, New York.

One week after the New York Times story on Eclipse, we undertook an informal mall intercept survey to determine consumer awareness and interest in trying the "smokeless cigarette". We were curious to see how smokers perceived this product, and whether they were interested in trying it.

Respondents were recruited by asking individuals at three shopping malls in Buffalo to participate in a 5 minute interview on cigarette smoking. Overall, 166 individuals were completed with a sample of 94 persons, including 26 smokers, 28 former smokers, and 40 individuals who had never smoked. Only two individuals who were approached were interviewed refusing participation in the survey. While the survey has not introduced to what extent persons would know about the Eclipse cigarette, researchers were given a diagram of Eclipse to show respondents. To help researchers understand the differences between Eclipse and a conventional cigarette, the diagram also listed several claims made about the product in the New York Times article (that is, reduce tar levels by 90%, eliminate 95% of secondhand smoke, produce less smoke (in much nicotine as a regular cigarette). Sixty percent of respondents stated that they had heard about the Eclipse cigarette. How the survey showed respondents the diagram of Eclipse, it was apparent that most people were unfamiliar with the unique features of the product and how it differed from a conventional cigarette.

None of the novice smokers and former smokers we interviewed expressed interest in trying Eclipse. However, 85% of the smokers stated that they would be interested in trying the product. Respondents who expressed interest in trying Eclipse. Most of those who did not describe benefits they believed to be associated with the product. The most frequently mentioned benefits were less smoke and tar. All respondents were asked to describe potential problems associated with the Eclipse cigarette. The most often mentioned problems were addiction and disposal of the device.

The vast majority of respondents answered affirmatively to a question about whether Eclipse should be subjected to government testing for safety. However, when asked whether Eclipse should be sold alongside regular cigarettes only 70% said the product should be available like cigarettes. Anecdotal comments received from respondents to our survey give us the impression that both smokers and non-smokers are sceptical about claims being made about the safety of Eclipse in relation to conventional cigarettes.

A recent study showed that about 70% of adult smokers in the United States want to stop smoking, but many of these smokers do so out of concern for their health.