

A message from those who do... to those who don't

Some non-smokers are annoyed by cigarette smoke. This is a reality that's been with us for a long time.

Lately, however, many non-smokers have been led to believe that cigarette smoke in the air can actually cause disease.

And yet there is little evidence and nothing which proves scientifically that cigarette smoke causes disease in non-smokers.

The London Times reported findings from the Institute of Cancer Research in Surrey, England, published in this month's edition of the 'British Journal of Cancer,' that 'passive smoking' for life-long non-smokers carries no significant increase in the risk of lung cancer, bronchitis or heart disease (all allegedly associated with smoking).

The Institute's conclusions are based on a wealth of statistical detail from a study involving 12,000 people. In a study by a Vice-President

of the American Cancer Society in 1981 which involved 175,000 people, it was reported that 'passive smoking' had "very little, if any" effect on lung cancer rates among non-smokers.

In the follow-up study published in 1985, no statistically significant increase in risk was reported.

Researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health found that a non-smoker would have to spend 100 hours straight in the smokiest bar to "absorb" the equivalent of a single filter tip cigarette.

Major reviews on 'passive smoking' over the last few years have concluded that 'passive smoking' cannot be shown to be a health risk. The weight of evidence is summed up in the remarks at the conclusion of the 1984 Vienna Health Conference which was held in co-operation with the World Health Organisation: "should law makers wish to take legislative measures

with regard to passive smoking, they will, for the present, not be able to base their efforts on a demonstrated health hazard from passive smoking."

Often our own concerns about health can take an unproven claim and magnify it out of all proportion; so what begins as a misconception turns into a frightening myth.

Alright, cigarette smoke may be annoying to some non-smokers, but how shall we deal with these problems? Confrontation? Segregation? Legislation? No.

We think annoyance is neither a governmental nor a medical problem. It's a people problem. Smokers can help by being more considerate and responsible. Non-smokers can help by being more tolerant. And both groups can help by showing more respect for each others rights and feelings.

Don't let intolerant minority pressure groups use you to create divisions between Australians.