

# Herald Sun

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## Queensland LNP Government threatens to sue tobacco companies for the cost to health sector

- by: *Renee Viellaris*
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Big tobacco has moved into the legal sights of the State Government, with Health Minister Lawrence Springborg saying smokers were "putting pressure on our already burdened system", and indicated legal action was possible.  
*Source: The Courier-Mail*

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"Options for legal action would need to be considered based on specific advice but Queensland Health would welcome any opportunity that assists in addressing the costs of smoking on the health sector," said Mr Springborg.

One in seven deaths in the state are due to smoking, according to latest Queensland Health figures, with an average 3422 deaths a year.

Moves to turn the legal screws on tobacco companies were backed by Professor Mike Daube, who chaired the Commonwealth's committee that recommended plain packaging for tobacco products.

**Prof Daube, president of the Australian Council on Smoking and Health, said it was time state governments considered US-style legal action against the companies.**

## BY THE NUMBERS

**\$226 million**

The cost of smoking to Queensland's health system each year

**4000+**

Number of chemicals that hit your brain, heart and other organs within 10 seconds of your first puff

**30,450**

People admitted to Queensland hospitals for smoking-related illness

**3400**

Queenslanders killed by smoking every year – 10 times more than the road toll

**276,000**

Smokers with children under 15 years of age in the household in Queensland

**1412**

Drivers slapped with \$200 on-the-spot fines for smoking in the presence of children since 2010

**750,000**

Days spent in hospital as a result of smoking

**15.5%**

Queenslanders aged 18 years and over who smoke daily

Smoking in Queensland: By the numbers.

Major US tobacco companies in 1998 agreed with 46 US state attorneys-general to give them \$200 billion over 25 years and settle lawsuits for treating sick smokers.

Prof Daube said: "We have known for decades that cigarettes are a wonderfully efficient killing machine. State governments should . . . emulate the US states that won hundreds of billions of dollars by suing tobacco companies for the costs of smoking."

In addition to exploring legal action, Mr Springborg said the State Government was also prepared to consider tougher laws on smoking.

Smoking bans already exist for indoor and outdoor public places, as well as tough restrictions on retail advertising, display and promotion of tobacco products.

Anti-smoking groups have lobbied to extend laws to limit the number of outlets selling tobacco, and make smoking a classifiable element in movies.

**Figures released to *The Sunday Mail* show** ([/news/queensland/fines-not-enough-to-push-parents-to-butt-out-in-cars/story-e6freoof-1226567381288](http://news/queensland/fines-not-enough-to-push-parents-to-butt-out-in-cars/story-e6freoof-1226567381288)) since new laws were introduced in Queensland in 2010 **making it an offence to smoke in a vehicle with a child under 16 years, 1412 drivers had been slapped with a \$200 on-the-spot fine** ([/news/queensland/fines-not-enough-to-push-parents-to-butt-out-in-cars/story-e6freoof-1226567381288](http://news/queensland/fines-not-enough-to-push-parents-to-butt-out-in-cars/story-e6freoof-1226567381288)).

"Should we and could we go further, I am prepared to look at options with my inter-state colleagues," said Mr Springborg.

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