

D Grade Round 4

That smokers should not have their medical treatments subsidised

Background:

It is indisputable that smoking tobacco products, such as cigarettes, can cause addiction, lung diseases and heart illnesses, as well as increase risk for several other conditions.

Medicare is Australia's universal health care system. It fully covers visits to public hospitals and partially covers the costs of other services including psychology and physiotherapy. Medicare subsidises medical treatment by having the Australian Government pay a portion or whole of what the service costs.

It is intended as a "safety net". If you aren't able to take out private coverage, Medicare is there to catch you if you have an accident or unexpected illness. The science that shows smoking may cause various illnesses as been in the public knowledge for decades now.

Questions for consideration:

- What impacts, positive and negative, could not subsidising medical treatments for smokers have on smokers?
- What impacts could this have on the healthcare system?
- How could other people be impacted by a smoker not receiving subsidised treatment? Are there benefits and detriments?
- What message would this change send from the Government? What does it suggest they do and don't support?
- How much control do smokers have over their choice to smoke? Is smoking like other risky behaviours?

Resources:

Health risks of smoking:

<https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/smoking-and-tobacco/about-smoking-and-tobacco/what-are-the-effects-of-smoking-and-tobacco>

What is Medicare?

<https://theconversation.com/explainer-what-is-medicare-and-how-does-it-work-22523>

Economic cost of smoking:

<https://www1.racgp.org.au/newsqp/professional/smoking-costs-australia-close-to-137-billion>

An opinion article in the Sydney Morning Herald:

<https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/health-and-wellness/should-smokers-be-denied-health-care-20171024-p4ywmi.html>

About a similar change to the UK's Medicare (called the NHS).

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2012/apr/28/doctors-treatment-denial-smokers-obese>