

Tuck shop is target

School bans "cigarettes" after parents' complaints

A primary school in Adelaide has withdrawn chocolate cigarettes from the school tuck shop after complaints from parents and the Australian Council on Smoking and Health (ACOSH). Schools should be involved in educating children about the dangers of smoking rather than encouraging them to imitate adult smokers, the parents said.

Mr Phil Williams, the honorary secretary for ACOSH in South Australia, contacted the Ferryden Park Primary School, but felt the issue was not treated seriously enough in the first instance.

"I felt that the principal's attitude was flip-pant and that he wanted to avoid controversy. He appeared to dismiss our complaints, and I got the feeling that he was unconcerned," Mr Williams told *MJA News Features*.

"Frankly, I'm not sure what kids see in those 'cigarettes' other than the chance to be like an adult."

ACOSH has been consistently opposed to the sale of confectionary cigarettes, particularly in schools.

"Imitating adults is a big thing with kids, and the 'smoking' of chocolate or liquorice cigarettes simply reinforces that. It is a factor in children becoming accustomed to smokers and the habit."

"Schools should not be selling make-believe cigarettes to children. Schools should be asking themselves whether the tuck shops are there for profit or for the benefit of the kids."

That question was put to the principal of the Ferryden Park Primary School, Mr Paul Dimetriou. He said that the chocolate cigarettes were removed as soon as he had received the complaint from ACOSH.

"I'm dead against smoking and haven't smoked since I puffed on a cigarette out of my father's ashtray when I was four — 42 years ago."

Mr Dimetriou estimated that two-thirds of his colleagues would be against confec-

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Confectionery cigarettes come in a myriad of sizes, shapes and tastes.

tionery cigarettes being sold in schools, but did not believe that any specific regulation prohibited their sale. He noted that children are constantly imitating smokers. For example, on a cold day, a child may put his fingers to his mouth and then blow "smoke", saying "See, I'm smoking." Other than occasional comments from teachers, no specific forum exists to educate primary schoolchildren about smoking, but he believed that more anti-smoking and drug education is needed.

To emphasize their opposition to chocolate, liquorice and sugar cigarettes, ACOSH bought the entire stock of confectionery cigarettes from a supermarket in Craigmore, near Adelaide, after the manager agreed to dispose of the stock. The cigarettes were then distributed to members of State Parliament.

Some politicians have told ACOSH that they would look into the sale of confectionery cigarettes, but that no laws existed to prevent their sale to children, particularly if the sweets were imported.

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