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The True Cost of Tobacco

#NoTobacco



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The Control of Tobacco Products and Electronic Delivery Systems Bill in South Africa has been the subject of various myths, particularly those propagated by the tobacco industry. Below is a compilation of these myths alongside factual clarifications:



UNDERMINING PUBLIC HEALTH REGULATIONS

By spreading misleading information, the industry seeks to weaken or delay the implementation of regulations that could restrict the sale, marketing, or consumption of tobacco products.

CREATING DOUBT ABOUT SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

The industry aims to cast uncertainty on established scientific research linking tobacco use to serious health issues. By funding studies that question the validity of independent research or highlight uncertainties, they attempt to confuse the public and policymakers.

REHABILITATING CORPORATE IMAGE

Through sponsored content and advertorials in reputable media outlets, tobacco companies endeavour to portray themselves as responsible entities committed to public health.



INFLUENCING POLICY AND PUBLIC OPINION

By disseminating favourable narratives and engaging in lobbying efforts, the industry seeks to sway public opinion and influence policymakers.

TARGETING NEW DEMOGRAPHICS

Misinformation strategies often aim to attract new users, including younger demographics, by downplaying health risks or promoting alternative products as safer. Sponsorships in events popular among youth, such as Formula 1 racing.





E-cigarettes are 95% safer than traditional cigarettes.

The claim that e-cigarettes are 95% safer lacks robust scientific backing. The study often cited for this statistic has been criticized for its methodology and potential conflicts of interest. Current evidence indicates that e-cigarettes introduce new toxic risks and may have adverse health effects.





E-cigarettes are harmless to health.

Emerging research shows that e-cigarettes can cause acute biological effects in the airways, similar to those seen in traditional smokers. They may increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases and lung conditions. Additionally, the vapor contains fine particles that can penetrate deep into the respiratory system.



E-cigarettes are the most effective method for quitting smoking.

Population-level studies suggest that e-cigarettes do not significantly aid smoking cessation. Users often continue to use both e-cigarettes and traditional cigarettes, rather than quitting altogether. Other cessation methods have proven to be equally or more effective without introducing new health risks.





The new Tobacco Control Bill will make e-cigarettes inaccessible to adult users.

The bill does not ban e-cigarettes but seeks to regulate their use, particularly to prevent uptake among young people and non-smokers. Adults will still have access to e-cigarettes; the regulations aim to protect public health without imposing a complete prohibition.

A hand holding a lit cigarette with a blurred background of people.

E-cigarettes do not lead to traditional cigarette smoking.

Studies indicate that young individuals who use e-cigarettes are more likely to transition to smoking traditional cigarettes. This suggests that e-cigarettes can act as a gateway to tobacco use among youth.



Nicotine is not harmful.

Nicotine is highly addictive and, when heated in e-cigarettes, can produce harmful substances like formaldehyde, a probable human carcinogen. Moreover, nicotine exposure during adolescence can adversely affect brain development.



Plain packaging and advertising bans will increase illicit trade.

While the tobacco industry argues that such regulations will boost illicit trade, evidence suggests that these measures effectively reduce smoking rates without significantly impacting illicit markets. The industry's claims often lack independent verification.



The Tobacco Control Bill will harm the economy and lead to job losses.

The bill aims to protect public health, which can lead to long-term economic benefits by reducing healthcare costs associated with tobacco-related diseases. While the tobacco industry warns of economic downsides, comprehensive analyses often reveal that the public health advantages outweigh potential economic drawbacks.





The bill's restrictions on smoking areas are unnecessary and infringe on personal freedoms.

The proposed measures are designed to protect non-smokers from second-hand smoke, which is a proven health hazard. Similar regulations have been successfully implemented worldwide to safeguard public health without unduly infringing on personal freedoms.



The bill's public consultation process is a mere formality and ignores public input.

The legislative process includes public consultations to incorporate diverse perspectives. While some stakeholders may feel their input is overlooked, the process aims to balance various interests to achieve public health objectives.



Thank you

