# Huffing and puffing on tobacco tax

Hird and Essendon

Tobacco products are taxed at a rate of 72 per cent.

As a consequence of the steady rise in tobacco products tax, illegal activities started, such as the unlicensed purchase of tobacco from growers and the sale of "chop chop" (untaxed tobacco).

The customs and excise branch of Government assigned field officers to undertake surveillance of tobacco farms. There was also a marked increase in the interdiction of smuggled cigarettes at ports and airports.

It is quite proper the Federal Government is concerned about the harm tobacco use causes in Australia, but people should have a right to use tobacco products if they wish.

More Australians die prematurely from unhealthy food consumption and overeating than tobacco use. It seems unfair smokers should have to pay an extortionate tax because the Federal Government is desperate to reduce its deficit.

There also seems to be a worrying moral element to the "persecution" of smokers.

**Alan Wells, Wembley**

## Smoke and mirrors

It is astonishing every time the Federal Government finds itself in a financial hole, usually of its own making, the first thing they wish to do is raise taxes on cigarettes and say it is for the benefit of the community.

This is hypocritical rubbish. And the anti-smoking lobby is not much better in its unwavering support for such measures.

Why don't they just make smoking and tobacco products illegal? If it is such a burden on society, ban it.

Yet it's simple why they don't — you cannot raise revenue from illegal products. If they were to ban smoking, where would they find the replacement revenue? I guess they would have to raise the tax on their favourite bottle of red or white, not forgetting beer.

**James Hird**

Let's face it — alcohol causes just as much damage to health, sometimes with more far-reaching effects.

To make one section of society pay for a government's financial mismanagement under the guise it is being done for health benefits is not only unfair, unreasonable and unjust — it is also disingenuous.

I have recently quit smoking. And it wasn't for health or financial reasons; I just got bored with it.

Be careful what you wish for.

**Grant Atthowe, Bunbury**

## Tax discount

Pensioners, who started smoking before it was found to be unhealthy, should be exempt from paying more tax by showing their pension card when purchasing tobacco.

**Brian Chambers, Carlisle**