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War on smoking: the seven big guns

By JENNA PRICE

The war against smoking is a series of pitched battles and these seven soldiers are in the front line. They have fought for a long time. Now they smell victory.

They include politicians and public servants, ordinary citizens and even smokers. Between them they have achieved new legislation, increased public awareness and better health education.

To win the war against smoking means a lot to Mr Brian McBride, a senior Commonwealth public servant. He was the founding president of the Non-Smokers' Movement (NSM) in 1977.

Mr McBride successfully sued his local bus driver for smoking on the bus and has sued in at least nine other cases where smoking was the central issue, not always successfully.

For Mr McBride, true victory would mean no smoking in public. "It should only be for consenting adults in the privacy of their own home," he says.

Mrs Elaine Henry, executive officer of the NSW Cancer Council, began her campaign in 1967 when she worked as a researcher on smoking and health. Now her aim is to ensure the proposed legislation is passed by June 1 (the date the legislation lapses if it is not passed).

"Politicians mustn't lose their spunk," she said.

Health warnings on cigarettes are pathetic, she says. She wants tougher wording: "Smoking kills." She also wants cigarette vending machines limited to licensed premises and she believes in limiting points-of-sale.

Dr Arthur Chesterfield Evans, president of the NSM, says his career in medicine made him realise how many of the patients he sees become sick through tobacco.

He says that each prosecution launched by the NSM costs at least \$13,000 and he wonders why a



The anti-smoking brigade... Elaine Henry, Peter Collins, Brian McBride, Sheila Walker, Arthur Chesterfield Evans, Ric Bolzan, and Andrew Refshauge. Picture by PETER RAE

Mr Ric Bolzan, manager of photographic services at the Australian Museum, was a smoker in his early twenties. His grandfather died of lung cancer in 1980 and the illness was a catalyst for Mr Bolzan who, with two others, began BUGA-UP (Billboard Utilising Graffitiists Against Unhealthy Promotions).

BUGA-UP was responsible for altering the messages on billboards advertising cigarettes. It was also, he says, responsible for bringing much public attention to the battle against smoking.

Dr Andrew Refshauge, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, is still a smoker and it is the main reason he continues to battle tobacco. He has been addicted since 12 and regards nicotine as a more powerful drug than heroin.

His aim is to stop children smoking but he also considers that levying taxes would be an effective deterrent.

Dr Refshauge said that targeting girls to encourage them to continue sport and not to admire the underweight body image would be a primary aim in the battle.

The Attorney-General, Mr Collins, says that his family were all smokers and he remembers long trips over the Blue Mountains in smoke-filled Volkswagens.

He says: "Given that we are now accepting no more sponsorships we need a more direct response to passive smoking in public buildings."

Mrs Sheila Walker, education director of the National Heart Foundation in NSW, who has a nursing background, said: "I have seen a lot of diseased lungs being taken out."

PAGE 4: Smokers cost employers \$300m a year through illness.



private organisation should have to enforce breaches of an act.

Enforcement mechanisms were vital but he also believed that raising the tax on cigarettes from 57 per cent to 87 per cent (as Denmark has) would significantly reduce smoking.

Saturday, April 11, 1992

LETTERS

Smoking debate

SIR: Your article, "War on Smoking - The 7 Big Guns" (*Herald*, April 8), while being more moderate in its language than some public statements on the issue, still accepts the militant approach as being necessarily right.

There has been too much self-righteous rhetoric used to mould public opinion and justify interference with what is after all a lawful activity. One wonders what the public really think of the extraordinary allegations which are being made and which the anti-smoking crusaders have so far refused to expose to rational debate.

Your portrayal of Ric Bolzan is particularly offensive to the industry; in apparently condoning acts of vandalism by BUGA-UP the *Herald* is not helping to inject some sense into this issue.

If there must be a debate on smoking, let's lose the pompous evangelism and deal with the matter rationally.

Martin Riordan,
Manager,
Corporate Affairs,
W. D. and H. O. Wills (Aust) Ltd,
April 8
Pagewood.