

# Hong Kong health department moves decisively to protect the cigarette trade



World's most dynamic city should choose: innovation or prohibition?

Another day another prohibitionist move against e-cigarettes - this time in Hong Kong. I would like someone, just one person somewhere in the world (but if possible someone at WHO), to explain why it is good policy to ban a product that nobody disputes is many times lower risk than cigarettes *while cigarettes remain freely available*. How can it be ethical to say to a smoker: “*you know those cigarettes? They're gonna kill you*” and then say “*sorry we're going to ban these alternatives that will cause you a fraction the harm, if any*”. Really? So it is with heavy hearts, Gerry Stimson and I write to the Hong Kong Legislative Council Panel on Health Services to argue against the Department of Health's irresponsible proposal to ban sale of e-cigarettes. There's a hearing coming up on 6 July 2015. Here's the relevant documents:

Legislative Council: Panel of Health Services. Relevant papers for Legislative Council Panel on Health Services, special session 6th July 2015

- [Agenda](#)
- [Progress of Tobacco Control Measures](#) - the final proposal would ban e-

cigarettes

- [Updated background brief](#)
- [Paper with supplementary information requested by members at the meeting on 18 May 2015](#) - contains a supportive letter from WHO, but this conspicuously avoids endorsing the e-cigarette ban.

Submission from Clive Bates and Professor Gerry Stimson, in which we argue the case against prohibiting sale of e-cigarettes

- [Panel on Health Services hearing 6 July 2015 - written submission](#) -
- [Chinese translation](#) (please download and view with Adobe Acrobat Reader rather than a browser PDF viewer plugin)

All submissions for the meeting (there are a lot) are accessible via the [Legislative Council's list of published submissions](#).

Tobacco control. A local prohibitionist non-governmental organisation, the [Hong King Council on Smoking & Health \(COSH\)](#) has been feeding the government a highly misleading reading of the evidence through its [e-cigarette position statement](#) and has been [campaigning to have e-cigarettes banned](#) - why it thinks this is good for health rather than protective of cigarette sales is anyone's guess.

A more realistic view of the evidence is presented in my [Briefing for Policymakers](#).