



## Health

# Australian governments urged to set a date to ban cigarette retail sales

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Governments must set a date for banning the sale of cigarettes through retailers including supermarkets, and find new ways of boosting revenue without relying on tobacco excise taxes, leading public health researchers say.

It comes as research published in the Medical Journal of Australia (MJA) on Monday found 1,466 respondents (52.8%) to a Victorian Cancer Council survey agreed with phasing out the sale of cigarettes in retail outlets.

“Sometimes the public is ahead of the policy,” associate prof Coral Gartner, an international expert in tobacco control policy with the University of Queensland, said.

In a separate MJA piece also published on Monday, Gartner and her colleagues wrote it is time for governments to move beyond measures that focus

on consumers such as plain-packaging laws and tobacco-harm warnings, and start focusing on supply.

There is an urgent need for “ending the regulatory exceptionalism that has maintained the legal status of tobacco products as a consumer good”, the piece says.

“Cigarettes do not meet modern consumer product safety standards,” Gartner and her colleagues wrote.

“It is normal for governments to remove unsafe products such as contaminated food, asbestos, and lead paint from the market. The successful defence of Australia’s tobacco plain packaging laws against international trade disputes demonstrates that governments have the right to introduce tobacco control measures to protect the health of its citizens, even when these measures reduce commercial profits and have an impact on international trade.”

Gartner, who is the director of the National Health and Medical Research Council Centre of Research Excellence on Achieving the Tobacco Endgame, told Guardian Australia while it may appear Australia is a world leader in tobacco control, due to plain packaging laws and graphic warning labels, other countries have gone further.

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The Netherlands has passed laws preventing supermarkets from selling cigarettes from 2024, New Zealand has proposed new measures that include significantly reducing the number of tobacco retail outlets and possibly removing nicotine from cigarettes, while California cities Beverly Hills and Manhattan Beach ended tobacco sales on 1 January this year.

“We are expecting the New Zealand government to announce their smoke-free action plan in the next few weeks, and the policies that they have consulted on are really innovative and make Australia look like we are lagging behind,” Gartner said.

“We need to start having the same conversations in Australia now because there are details that need to be considered. We don’t want to criminalise people, and are not talking about making tobacco an illicit product, and we don’t want people with addiction having difficulty quitting and finding an illicit supply. So we need to start doing research now and consulting on acceptable alternative options.”

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A spokesperson for the federal Department of Health told Guardian Australia that there was strong evidence that comprehensive public health strategies focusing on both the supply and demand of tobacco were most likely to achieve long-term health gains, prevent the uptake of smoking and reduce smoking prevalence.

Responsibility for the retail sale of tobacco products was a matter for state territory governments, he said.

“The government will continue to work with state and territory governments to explore a range of new evidence-based measures to further reduce smoking prevalence having regard to both supply reduction and demand reduction measures,” he said.

In 2021, the Australian Council on Smoking and Health - a coalition of peak non- government health organisations - called for parties in the Western Australian state election to commit to ending tobacco sales by 2030. In 2012 the Tasmanian parliament discussed ending tobacco sales to anyone born after the year 2000, with a parliamentary committee finding no “significant legal impediment” to the proposal. [Doctors in the UK have made similar appeals.](#)

Tobacco smoking is the leading cause of premature death and disability in Australia, estimated to have killed 1.28 million Australians between 1960 and 2020. Up to two-thirds of deaths in tobacco smokers are attributed to smoking, while long-term smokers die an average of 10 years earlier than non-smokers.

The draft national preventive health strategy sets a goal of reducing smoking to below 5% by 2030, which Gartner said would not be achieved through industry self-regulation and voluntary approaches.

An epidemiologist and tobacco researcher with the Australian National University, Prof Emily Banks, said she agreed tough action to reduce access to cigarettes was needed, but said retailers did not have to wait for government reform to stop selling cigarettes.

“Supermarkets want to be seen as places that are promoting healthy products for people, like fresh fruit and vegetables, but they’re still selling these toxic products,” she said. “I think it is a really good time for those organisations to ask themselves: ‘Do we still want to do this?’”

urge, ban, boost, retail, innovative

Should retail sales of cigarettes be banned?

Should Korea phase out the production and sale of cigarettes altogether?

Does it bother you that the government makes money manufacturing cigarettes?

What should the government focus on to make South Korea better?

I would like the government to ban .....

If you are a smoker, are you considering quitting?

If you are a non smoker, what would you like to say to a smoker?

Have you ever told someone to put out their cigarette?

Tough action is needed to .....

# Does serving spicy food to young children violate human rights?

2021-11-11 : 12:29



Students of an elementary school in Seoul are served lunch in this Oct. 13, 2019 photo. Yonhap

## Civic group files petition with rights watchdog

By Bahk Eun-ji

A controversy has arisen over whether serving spicy foods as part of children's school lunches at kindergartens attached to elementary schools is in violation of their human rights.

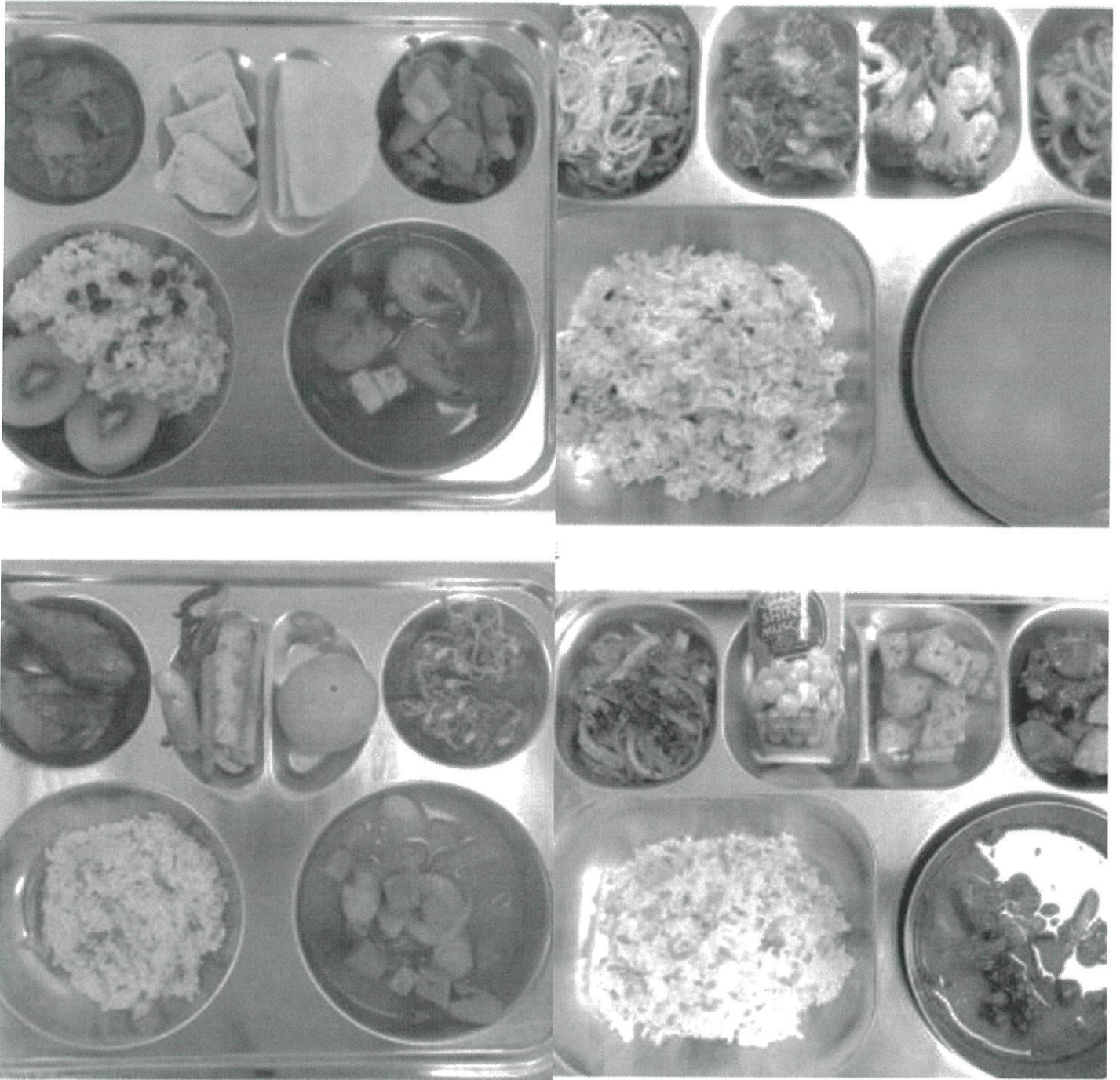
Parents are showing mixed responses over the issue, after a civic group, Political Mamas, filed a complaint on Tuesday with the National Human Rights Commission of Korea (NHRCK) against the Ministry of Education.

In Korea, some public kindergartens are attached to public elementary schools to share space and facilities of the schools. In most cases, children at such kindergartens also share the school cafeteria and are served the same food as elementary school students.

The civic group said kindergarteners, aged five to seven, and elementary students aged eight to 13 are served the same foods, regardless of being at different stages of physical development with

quite a lot of foods containing spicy seasoning, including kimchi.

"As a result, many children at such kindergartens and some lower graders of elementary schools have difficulty eating meals because they are too spicy. This also leads to indigestion for some children," Jang Ha-na, a member of Political Mamas, said in a statement.



Meals including spicy side dishes and soups provided at public kindergartens attached to elementary schools / Courtesy of Political Mamas

"Children not eating spicy food is not about being picky. Young children have more sensitive taste buds than adults, so they can feel pain. Excessive consumption of such food can also cause problems with their digestive system," Jang said.

The civic group pointed out that private kindergartens and public ones not attached to elementary schools provide meals suitable for young children's taste and nutrition.

"Not being able to eat spicy food is not about preference or bad habits the children have to break. Forcing them to eat such food is nothing but a human rights violation," the group said.

The petition has stirred debate among parents over whether spicy meals are a violation of children's rights.

Lee Ha-na, a mother of a second grader at a public elementary school in Nowon District in Seoul and a six-year-old attending a kindergarten attached to the school, said her children do not usually eat lunch at school. She always prepares snacks for them to eat after school.

"I was a bit surprised when spicy chicken was served at my six-year-old daughter's kindergarten a few days ago. I felt terrible when my daughter said she ate only rice because the other side dishes and soup were too spicy," Lee said.

"Some people say if parents decide to send their children to such kindergartens, it means they have to shoulder such minor problems because the tuition is free. But I don't agree with that. School meals are closely related to our children's rights."

Jo Jung-ran, a mother of a six-year-old boy, also said it is a violation of children's basic rights to prevent them from having a suitable meal by providing too many spicy foods.

"Is it really necessary to feed spicy food to young children in kindergartens or lower grades of elementary school? For upper graders of elementary school, they are used to spicy food because they usually eat the same food as adults anyway, but I don't know why they provide spicy food to young children who have not yet developed their sense of taste," Jo said.

However, some others say it is an overreaction from parents who are "too sensitive."

"It's a little surprising that some people say serving spicy food in schools can be a human rights violation," said Kim Seung-ho, a father of a nine-year-old son attending a public elementary school in Songpa District in southeastern Seoul.

"My son and his friends often say they like spicy food offered as school lunch and they enjoy trying new food. I'm actually satisfied that a variety of foods are being served at the school," Kim said.

A mother of a seven-year-old daughter in Nowon District, who wished to be identified only by her surname Kim, also said those parents who don't want their children to eat spicy food should not send their children to kindergartens attached to schools.

"Parents knew the meals would be provided like this, but they made a decision. It's not possible for a school cafeteria to prepare food separately only for kindergarteners and lower graders of elementary school. It's a matter of choice, and if they make a decision, the parents are responsible for making their children get used to such spicy food," Kim said.

hyperbole, violate, controversy, regardless of, picky, shoulder

Do you think serving spicy food to kindergarteners is a human rights violation?

Do you think that Political Mamas is being hyperbolic when they call it a human rights violation?

Are you a picky eater? Is there any dish that is too spicy for you?

When was the last time you had indigestion?

At what age is it suitable to give children spicy food?

What would you like to say to Jo Jung-ran?

What controversy are you following in the news?

What responsibility do you have to shoulder?