THE SENATE

SMOKING IN FILMS

SPEECH

Thursday, 15 May 2008

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE
Senator ALLISON (Victoria—Leader of the Australian Democrats) (10.06 am)—I move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes:

(i) the recent research done by the Cancer Council of New South Wales indicating that 70 per cent of top box office films contained depictions of smoking, including 75 per cent of the most popular PG-rated films,

(ii) the research by the American Lung Association showing that more than two-thirds of the top 50 United States of America box office films of 2004-05 classified for children’s viewing depicted smoking, some with as many as 14 depictions of smoking an hour,

(iii) that positive depictions of smoking in films normalise and promote smoking, particularly for young people, and that on-screen smoking influences children’s attitudes and behaviour to the extent that it can increase a child’s chance of becoming a smoker later in life, and

(iv) that evidence overseas shows that the tobacco industry has provided inducements for such positive depictions of smoking and that this is not consistent with the objectives of the Tobacco Advertising Prohibition Act 1992; and

(b) urges the Government to heed the latest call by the Australian Medical Association and adopt strategies and regulatory measures to counter the influence of smoking in films, including:

(i) a film classification system that provides clear warnings about the extent and nature of smoking in films with films attracting an appropriate descriptor such as ‘pervasive smoking’ in the same way that descriptors warn of coarse language, sexual references, nudity and violence,

(ii) anti-smoking announcements before films that depict smoking, and

(iii) changes to guidelines to ensure that public funds are not used to support Australian films that glamorise or promote smoking.

Question negatived.