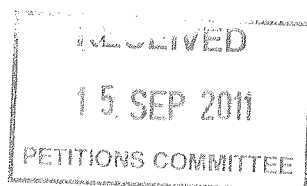




THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP  
MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGEING

499/823  
499/842

The Hon John Murphy MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Petitions  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Mr ~~Murphy~~

Thank you for your letter of 4 July 2011 regarding a petition made to the Speaker of the House of Representatives in relation to plain packaging of tobacco products.

The Australian Government is implementing plain packaging of tobacco products as part of a comprehensive suite of reforms to reduce tobacco consumption and its harmful effects. These reforms include an increase in the tobacco excise of 25 per cent, legislation to restrict internet advertising of tobacco products in Australia, and more than \$85 million in anti-smoking social marketing campaigns, including \$27.8 million for campaigns targeted at high risk and highly disadvantaged groups who are hard to reach through mainstream campaigns.

Although smoking rates are falling, approximately three million Australians are still smoking. The chilling facts are that smoking kills over 15,000 Australians every year and costs our society \$31.5 billion each year. Helping people to give up smoking, and minimising the chance of them starting, are major priorities for this Government.

The Government's proposed plain packaging legislation is a world first and sends a clear message that the glamour is gone – cigarette packs will now only show the death and disease that can come from smoking. The new packs have been designed to have the lowest appeal to smokers and to make clear the terrible effects that smoking can have on your health.

The research evidence to June 2009 in support of plain packaging is set out extensively in the reports of the National Preventative Health Taskforce available at [www.preventativehealth.org.au](http://www.preventativehealth.org.au). Since 2009 the evidence base has continued to grow.

The research shows that plain packaging will:

- increase the noticeability, recall and impact of health warning messages;
- reduce the ability of packaging to mislead consumers to believe that some products may be less harmful than others; and
- reduce the attractiveness of the tobacco product, for both adults and children.

Plain packaging will not take away an individual's ability to distinguish between and choose brands, but will reduce the ability of a manufacturer to use packaging to promote their product. Brand and variant names of tobacco products will still be permitted to appear on retail packaging, in specified locations and with a standardised font, size and colour. Brand names will be permitted to appear on the top, bottom and front of cigarette packaging.

We know that these changes will not be popular with everyone. However, we have a responsibility to encourage smokers to quit and to discourage people, especially young people, from taking it up.

I appreciate you bringing the contents of the petition to the Government's attention and trust that the information I have provided is of assistance to the House.

Yours sincerely

**NICOLA ROXON**

14 SEP 2011