



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Tobacco Plain Packaging

SPEECH

Monday, 4 July 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Monday, 4 July 2011 Page 139 Questioner Speaker Ms RISHWORTH</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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(Kingston) (NaN.NaN pm)

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (12:1 3): I am very pleased to speak on this motion today. Tobacco products have a negative impact on the health of Australians. There is significant evidence to suggest that the packet in particular—the creative design, branding and promotion of tobacco—influences nonsmokers to take up smoking. Tobacco smoking remains one of the leading causes of preventable death and disease among Australians, killing over 15,000 Australians every year and costing our economy close to \$31.5 billion annually. Tobacco products can have a devastating impact on the lives of Australian smokers and their families, with smoking being the leading cause of cancer, accounting for approximately 20 to 30 per cent of all cancers. Both active and passive smoking increase the risk of lung cancer and a number of other life-threatening diseases, including cardiovascular disease, stomach cancer, pancreatic cancer, liver cancer, cervical cancer, leukaemia and oral cancers. We also know that most Australian smokers regret ever having started smoking and have made at least one attempt to quit. It is for these important reasons that the Gillard Labor government is committed to decreasing smoking rates in Australia.

The motion before us today does acknowledge that there is significant, compelling evidence to suggest that creative design, branding and promotion of tobacco through packaging reduces the impact of graphic health warnings, increases the attractiveness of tobacco products for adolescents and misleads consumers to believe that some products are less harmful than others. A report prepared by Quit and the Cancer Council of Australia called *Plain packaging of tobacco products: a review of the evidence* draws on some 24 studies over two decades to show that the packaging of tobacco products is a very powerful marketing tool, particularly for recruiting new smokers. Studies have shown that health warnings are significantly more effective in causing the smoker to consider the health risks of their behaviour and to consider quitting when they appear against the background of a plain packet. The evidence suggests that innovative brand imagery works to defuse the impact of these serious messages that health warnings seek to communicate to customers. Furthermore, removing brand imagery means that there is more space available to increase the prominence of graphic health warnings.

It is also common knowledge that packaging is a highly effective marketing tool used to link particular brands with desirable attributes such as status, identity, values and style. A study conducted in 2009 revealed that removing brand elements such as colour, branded font and imagery from cigarette packets resulted in adolescent smokers seeing packs as less appealing, associating typical smokers of that brand of cigarette with less positive attributes and having negative expectations of cigarette quality and taste. Thus, plain packaging reduces the attractiveness of tobacco products for adolescents in particular.

There is also considerable evidence that unregulated packaging colour and imagery mislead consumers to believe that some tobacco products are less harmful than others. A study conducted in 2006 of 8,243 smokers in a number of countries, including Australia, found that smokers of gold, silver, blue or purple brands were more likely than smokers of either red or black brands to believe that their own brand might be less harmful. Researchers also conclude that removing colours, as well as terms such as 'smooth', 'gold' or 'silver', from cigarette packs would reduce these kinds of false beliefs.

It is important to acknowledge that there is strong evidence to support the view that plain packaging is an effective means of reducing smoking rates, and I am pleased the opposition have decided to get on board. I am sure we will hear from the opposition that there is no evidence and that this is just a fad that the Gillard government is going with. I ask them to seriously look at the Cancer Council's review of these studies, where there are good, peer-reviewed journal articles that support the positive impact that plain packaging can have against attractiveness of cigarettes and for the importance of communicating those health warnings.

It is this government that is committed to taking action to reduce smoking, and this motion, importantly, recognises the many reforms that this government has already implemented with the aim of reducing smoking and its harmful effects. On 1 January this government established the National Preventive Health Agency. There are a lot of things. I cannot go into all of them, but I commend the motion to the House. (*Time expired*)