

JTI Calls for Transparency on Australian ‘Plain’ Packaging Report

Delayed Publication of Government’s Post-Implementation Review Raises Concern about its Integrity

Geneva, October 6, 2015 – The Australian Government has yet to publish its Post-Implementation Review (PIR) into ‘plain’ packaging for tobacco products, six months after the consultation period ended. The delay has prompted concerns that the authors of the report could be misrepresenting the data and even omitting evidence to ensure that the policy is perceived as a success.

Plain packaging was introduced in 2012 with the aim of reducing smoking levels. The latest official data from the Australian Government¹ shows no change to the decline in smoking rates, making it increasingly difficult for supporters to claim plain packaging has achieved its goals.

“The Department of Health (DoH) knows that this policy has failed”, says Michiel Reerink, JTI’s Regulatory Strategy Vice President. “The objective of the ban on brands was to improve public health by discouraging people from using tobacco products, and reducing their exposure to tobacco smoke. The Government’s own data shows that these objectives have not been met,” he adds.

The DoH opened its review into plain packaging earlier this year, calling for evidence about the impact of the policy. That consultation period ended in March 2015. Government guidelines² suggest that PIRs should be published within 3-6 months of information being gathered.

“Tobacco control lobbyists are travelling around the world on taxpayers’ money to convince regulators that plain packaging has been a success in Australia”, continues Mr. Reerink. “But anyone who looks at the official data can see for themselves: there is no proof that this ban on brands has worked.”

¹ National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2013: tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs.

² Source: http://www.dpmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/017_Post-implementation_reviews_0.pdf

“We urge the Department of Health to publish a complete and transparent review of this policy, without further delay”, suggests Mr. Reerink. “The PIR should be based on all of the evidence, in-line with the requirements of the Australian Government’s Office of Best Practice Regulation. Crucially, the results of the plain packaging policy should be measured against its original objectives. Without this report being published soon, people risk being misled by biased reports and analysis on a measure that has done nothing to improve public health”, he concludes.

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Notes to editors

According to the Australian Government:

“The objectives of the plain packaging measure are to:

- reduce the attractiveness and appeal of tobacco products to consumers, particularly young people;*
- increase the noticeability and effectiveness of mandated health warnings;*
- reduce the ability of the retail packaging of tobacco products to mislead consumers about the harms of smoking; and*
- through the achievement of these aims in the long term, as part of a comprehensive package of tobacco control measures, contribute to efforts to reduce smoking rates”*

See: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/tobacco-plain>

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JTI, a member of the Japan Tobacco Group of Companies, is a leading international tobacco manufacturer. It markets world-renowned brands such as Winston, Camel, Mevius and LD. Other global brands include Benson & Hedges, Silk Cut, Sobranie and Glamour. With headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, and about 26,000 employees worldwide, JTI has operations in more than 120 countries. Its core revenue in the fiscal year ended December 31, 2014, was USD 11.9 billion. For more information, visit www.jti.com.