

MEDIA RELEASE

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Tobacco tax will help smokers; Australians support plain packaging, oppose political donations

A national survey has found strong support for the recent tobacco tax increase, which will lead to a decline in smoking. The survey of 500 adults in Australian mainland states found that the 25% increase in tobacco tax announced earlier this month is supported by more than two thirds of the community, with two thirds of smokers in turn saying they will reduce the amount they smoke.

The national survey conducted by the Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer Control at Curtin University, also showed that:

- 68% supported the tobacco tax increase (with only 18% opposed).
- 77% supported the tobacco tax increase where the tax increase went towards health services (with only 12% opposed).
- 40% of non smokers and 39% of smokers believe the introduction of plain packaging for cigarettes will discourage young people from taking up smoking.
- Plain packaging is only opposed by 11% of Australians, with half supporting it and 41% having no opinion on the issue.
- There is a very high level of opposition to donations from tobacco companies to political parties. 69% of all Australians (70% of smokers, 69% of smokers) oppose these donations, with only 8% in favour.

The lead researcher, Professor Rob Donovan, Professor of Behavioural Research at Curtin University said that political parties accepting donations from tobacco companies are exposing themselves to public criticism. "The reality is that political parties receiving such donations will be seen by Australians as susceptible to lobbying from the tobacco industry", Professor Donovan said.

Professor Donovan said, "the case for getting rid of the last remaining forms of tobacco promotion is clearly well accepted. 90% of adults were in favour or did not disapprove of the use of plain packaging on cigarette packs. Approximately five times as many adults were in favour than against this initiative: 49% in favour versus 11% against." Professor Donovan added that these data clearly show that Australians support the introduction of plain packaging. It is encouraging that as many as 40% of non-smokers and 39% of smokers felt that the use of plain packaging will discourage young people from taking up smoking. "Any initiative that discourages young people from taking up smoking will substantially reduce the burden on our health system in the future," Professor Donovan said.

Professor Mike Daube, Professor of Health Policy and President of the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) said "These findings confirm that increasing the tax on cigarettes will reduce smoking and save lives".

"This level of support for the Government's measures designed to reduce smoking is enormously encouraging. The truth is that smoking is on the decline and tobacco companies are on the nose".

"Australians have clearly seen through the purpose of political donations from tobacco companies – only 8% support these donations – and only 3% show strong support".

"The tax increase, allied to massively increased expenditure on public education and plain packaging will save thousands of Australian lives. The tobacco industry's strong opposition is yet further evidence that these measures are in the public interest".

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