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TOBACCO INDUSTRY ELECTION CAMPAIGN MUST BE REJECTED

The tobacco industry's efforts to influence the election campaign must be rejected by all parties and politicians, according to the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA).

Plans have been revealed for a multi-million dollar tobacco industry advertising blitz, working through a new front organisation (the "Alliance of Australian Retailers") to oppose plain packaging for cigarettes.

"This is a lethal industry using its financial muscle to keep people smoking," said PHAA President Professor Mike Daube, who is also President of the Australian Council on Smoking and Health. "This desperate push by tobacco companies shows just how effective plain packaging will be."

"All parties and all candidates in the Federal election should reject this cynical effort by international tobacco companies to influence our election campaign. Plain packaging has been recommended by all the key health authorities, including the World Health Organisation and the National Preventative Health Taskforce."

"The argument that we should not reduce smoking because that might harm small business is absurd. Reducing smoking will also mean less business for oncologists and cardiologists, but we don't hear them complaining. The logical extension of this argument is that we should encourage road crashes to provide work for panel beaters."

"Cigarettes kill one in two of their regular users – more than 14,000 Australians every year. They are a lethal product, which kills and causes disease when used precisely as intended."

"This campaign is clearly heavily backed by the international tobacco companies that control the Australian market. The truth is that the international companies are terrified that if plain packaging is introduced here, it will be the start of a global domino effect."

"A recent international survey from the prestigious Reputation Institute showed that Big Tobacco is the world's least reputable industry. This appallingly cynical effort to buy support shows that their interest is solely in profit, not in the health of Australians."

"We are writing to all parties and all candidates in this election urging them not to cave in to pressure from the tobacco lobby, and to express strongly and publicly their support for a comprehensive approach to tobacco control, including plain packaging for tobacco products," said Professor Daube.

For further details/comment:

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