Media Release
15 October 2017

Big Tobacco – time to tell Australians the truth

Leading public health organisations and experts are calling on international tobacco companies to provide the Australian public with the same truthful health information that they will shortly provide for the American public through court-ordered corrective advertising.

Following 11 years of delays, major US tobacco companies including Altria, its Philip Morris USA subsidiary, and R. J. Reynolds (now owned by British American Tobacco) will finally have to tell the truth about their lethal products.

Tobacco companies have been forced by court-orders to run advertisements on the lethal nature of tobacco and related issues such as the adverse health effects of smoking, the addictiveness of smoking and nicotine, lack of health benefits from products marketed as being less harmful than regular cigarettes, the true harms of secondhand smoke, and the record of cigarette companies in intentionally designing cigarettes to make them more addictive.

This follows landmark legal action in the US and a judgement that the companies had violated civil racketeering laws and lied for decades about the health effects of smoking and marketing to children.

CEO of the Public Health Association Michael Moore, who is also President of the World Federation of Public Health Associations, said, “We have written to the Board Chairs of the British American Tobacco and Philip Morris International companies, which have over 70% of the Australian market. We have called on them to come clean with Australians, as they are doing in the US. Tobacco companies have lied and misled here for decades, exactly as they have done in America. They have promoted products designed to be addictive. And they are still targeting the young as well as low and middle income countries. Australian consumers, and those around the world, are entitled to the same level of information as Americans.”

Maurice Swanson, President of the Australian Council on Smoking and Health said, “International business consultants McKinsey have confirmed that the personal, social and economic costs of tobacco globally are even greater than the impact of armed violence, war, and terrorism. The tobacco industry must be held accountable for the harm it causes here in Australia as well as in the US.”
Professor Mike Daube, Professor of Health Policy at Curtin University said, “The tobacco industry has at last been forced to tell the truth in the US after decades of lies and deception. But here as elsewhere, they still fiercely oppose action that will reduce smoking and promote approaches to distract from measures that work. We call on this most lethal of industries to tell the truth to the Australian public about the massive toll of death and disease caused by smoking, and its record of manipulating everything from marketing to the product itself. Here as in the US, they have lied for too long.”

Professor Simon Chapman Emeritus Professor of Public Health at Sydney University said, “Tobacco companies love telling us what responsible corporate citizens they are. Here’s a golden opportunity for them to put their money where their mouth is. True contrition always involves publicly attempting to make good the harm done, so a year’s worth of corrective advertising on prime time TV would be as appropriate here as it is in the USA.”

A summary of the “Agreement Reached on Implementing Corrective Statements in U.S. Government Lawsuit October 04, 2017” may be found at the following link.
https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/press-releases/2017_10_04_corrective

Similarly, the corrective texts themselves from Text of Court-Ordered Corrective Statements: United States v. Philip Morris USA Inc. may be found at this link.
https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/assets/content/what_we_do/industry_watch/doj/corrective_statements/2017_10_corrective_statements.pdf

Attached:
Copy of letters to:
- Phillip Morris
- British American Tobacco

For further information/comment:
- Michael Moore, CEO Public Health Association of Australia 0417 249 731
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