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**BRITISH AMERICAN
TOBACCO**
AUSTRALASIA

Tuesday, 08 August 2017

Sydney tobacco raids are just the beginning

British American Tobacco Australia (BATA) commends the AFP, NSW Police and other agencies for their focus on illegal tobacco importers and dealers in their raids across Sydney this morning.

BATA spokesperson Josh Fett said that large scale operations like this are vital given the size and complexity of the tobacco black market. Unfortunately, what we have seen today is just the tip of the iceberg.

“Only yesterday we saw comments from ABF Assistant Commissioner Wayne Buchhorn acknowledging that at a street price of 60 times what it is purchased for overseas, illegal tobacco is extremely attractive to criminals”, Mr Fett said.

The current patchwork of responsibilities and enforcement tools doesn't adequately address the sophisticated criminal networks involved in tobacco smuggling.

BATA urges Australian governments to adopt a coordinated national anti-illegal tobacco strategy. This will provide impetus, clarity and resources to government departments and law enforcement agencies as well as crucial amendments to legislation to facilitate successful prosecutions.

“Australian taxpayers are already haemorrhaging \$1.6 billion to criminals each year due to illegal tobacco, and unless the Government acts now, this number will likely top \$3 billion by 2020”, Mr Fett said.

Media contact: Josh Fett on 02 9370 1222 or follow on Twitter @ BATA_Media