

Monday, 1 December 2014

Industry consultation a must during plain pack review

British American Tobacco Australia (BATA) today called for an open consultation during the Post-Implementation Review (PIR) of plain packaging which is expected to begin on 1 December 2014.

BATA spokesperson Scott McIntyre said the company was hopeful that all interested parties such as retailers, public health groups, tobacco manufacturers and government agencies who deal with enforcing illegal tobacco laws would be consulted during the process.

“We hope that any stakeholder who would like to have their say on the effectiveness of plain packaging will be able to do so and their voice will be heard,” Mr McIntyre said.

“Prior to plain packs being introduced we asked for a full consultation to the serious consequences we believed would come from the policy but unfortunately the former government didn’t listen.

“As we approach the second anniversary of the introduction of plain packaging we know that Australian Government youth smoking figures show a 32 per cent growth since the policy was introduced.

“NSW and SA Government figures released this year both shown not only an increase in youth smoking statistics, but a spike in overall incidence levels in both states. Again this has occurred since plain packaging.

“One of the key objectives of plain packaging was to reduce the attractiveness and appeal of tobacco products to young people. The fact youth smoking rates have jumped needs to be a key focus of the PIR.

“We have seen a huge number of arrests by Police and Customs including the capture of organised crime gangs who have been growing large amounts of chop chop and smuggling illegal cigarettes since the 1 December 2012 when plain packaging was implemented.

“Evidence from these agencies as well as reports by KPMG which show illegal tobacco now makes up over 14 per cent of all tobacco consumed in Australia should be taken into account. It costs the Australian Government and taxpayers nearly \$1.2 billion in forgone revenue.”

The plain packaging laws were not subject to the scrutiny of a Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) by the former government and are yet to be formally reviewed.

The Office of Best Practice Regulation regarded the RIS submitted by the Department of Health prior to the introduction of plain packaging as non-compliant. As such a PIR is required within two years after the implementation date.

“We trust the PIR process will be run to a much higher standard than the RIS and that all stakeholders will be properly consulted. We’re more than happy to assist where ever possible,” Mr McIntyre said.

“There are strong indications that plain packaging is failing and the spike in youth smoking figures and growth in the tobacco black market are key consequences.

“We’re hopeful of an open and transparent review which takes these alarming impacts into account.”

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