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**BRITISH AMERICAN
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A world with sensible tobacco legislation

On World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) British American Tobacco Australia (BATA) is calling for greater consultation between the Australian government and the tobacco industry to ensure more sensible and effective regulation in the future.

The government rushed ahead without consulting the industry on an unproven and untested plain packaging policy which BATA consistently said would lead to many serious unintended consequences.

Since its implementation on 1 December last year the legal tobacco market has remained stable.

BATA spokesman Scott McIntyre said early figures showed that cigarettes sales were in line with what the company expected with no changes to the trend in legal tobacco sales data.

“Australia is a mature market with heavy legislation and high levels of smoker education on the risks with tobacco and as such we’ve had a steady decline in smokers over the last ten years,” Mr McIntyre said.

“There has been no initial impact on legal tobacco sales in the first six months due to plain packaging. The steady decline we’ve seen in the last decade has continued at the same rate it was prior to 1 December last year and we don’t expect that to change.

“It appears the government has now moved on from plain packaging to investing millions of dollars studying the ingredients in cigarettes when essentially the vast majority in Australia are made of tobacco leaf and water.

“Regardless of the money wasted or time spent, tinkering with the ingredients won’t make a cigarette any safer so why are they heading down this path?

“If the government focused on stamping out the illegal tobacco market it could recover nearly a billion dollars a year in lost revenue.

“By reducing access to these illegal cigarettes which sell for \$6-8 a pack and are sold by criminals who don’t ask kids for ID, there is potential to reduce smoking rates further.

“Instead of continually targeting the legal market with policies that don’t work the government should focus more attention on the criminal gangs who run the black market in Australia.”

WNTD focuses on a world with no tobacco industry, but what would that really be like? Instead of dealing with legal tobacco companies who are willing to sit down and work with government on sensible regulation, they’d have to deal with criminal groups who obviously aren’t interested in negotiation.

Over 11 per cent of the world's cigarette market are bought and sold on the illegal black market. If there was no legal industry then these gangs would have a field day controlling the 100 per cent.

Governments would not receive the billions of dollars a year in tobacco excise each year as the criminals don't pay excise. Globally the tobacco industry generates around \$200 billion in tobacco taxes. In Australia the legal industry pays over \$10 billion each year to the Australian government in taxes.

When the only other option is organised crime then surely the focus should be on working with the legal industry to achieve sensible regulation, rather than trying to get rid of it.

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