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## **Tobacco plain packaging a winner – saving lives**

Tobacco plain packaging has been a remarkable success, and has already saved tens of thousands of lives, according to the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA). The Post Implementation Review, released today by the Australian Government, shows that since its implementation in December 2012 plain packaging has met the key objectives of the legislation – and beyond that has been responsible for a significant part of the decline in smoking since then. The report concludes that “this effect is likely understated and is expected to grow over time”.

PHAA Tobacco spokesperson Professor Mike Daube, who chaired the Australian Government’s Expert Committee that recommended plain packaging said, “This is great news for everyone except Big Tobacco. It shows clearly that the legislation is more than meeting its objectives. We know that smoking in adults and children and cigarette sales are declining, but it is especially rewarding that this meticulous independent analysis attributes part of that decline to plain packaging alone, even within its first three years”.

“Even leaving aside the rest of the decline, and impacts on children, plain packaging alone has been responsible for tens of thousands of adults quitting since its introduction in late 2012. This means that in its first three years plain packaging has already saved the lives of many thousand Australians. That’s a stunning outcome, especially as there is so much more to come,”

“Plain packaging was always about the long term, and especially focussed on children. Evidence that it has reduced smoking in adults in the short term is a huge bonus.”

“Smoking among adults is on the way out, and national surveys show that smoking in 12-17s is at an all-time low at 5%, with just 81,000 regular adolescent smokers around the country. Of course there are other factors in the big drop in smoking – plain packaging is part of a comprehensive approach. But the conclusion that plain packaging has been responsible on its own for part of this - a .55% fall in even in even less than the first three years alone - is great news, especially as it was always aimed at the longer term.”

PHAA Chief Executive Michael Moore said, “Plain packaging is a proven success. It is saving lives even in the short term, and will save many more in the years to come. No wonder the tobacco industry opposed it so desperately. All their arguments have failed, and plain packaging has become one of Australia’s most successful exports.”

“We congratulate all major parties for their continuing support of tobacco control and plain packaging. This is a triumph for public health and for a bipartisan approach to our largest preventable cause of death and disease. There is still work to be done, and the tobacco companies and their allies will do everything they can to keep selling their lethal products. This early outcome shows that the legislation is working, and Australia is winning the war on tobacco.”

**For further information/comment:**

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