

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

**Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017, 1 March 2017**

**Ref No:** SQ17-000067

**OUTCOME:** 2 - Health Access and Support Services

**Topic:** Plain Packaging - Cigars

**Type of Question:** Hansard Page 91, 1 March 2017

**Senator:** Leyonhjelm, David

**Question:**

Senator LEYONHJELM: The argument that I have heard regularly is that cigar smokers are not young people, that they are most predominantly men and that they are probably closer to my age than young people. Is there any research—and you used the word 'research' in your earlier answer—that would indicate that the consumers of cigars are influenced by plain packaging?

Dr Southern: I would need to take that one on notice. When I was talking about research in my earlier answer, I was thinking back to work that had informed the original government position to introduce plain packaging. I was not around at the time, so I would have to go back and check that, and take on notice your request around whether there is any research that goes to the issue that you have just spoken of.

Senator LEYONHJELM: The reason I draw this to your attention is because, amongst other things, the UK has decided that the criteria are different for cigarettes and cigars, consumers are different and factors that determine consumption are different, and as a consequence cigars are not included in plain packaging in the UK.

Dr Southern: Yes, that is correct.

Senator DI NATALE: Just ask Joe Hockey and Mathias Cormann.

Senator LEYONHJELM: Yes. I smoke them myself. I am wondering what the foundation for the policy is that they get treated the same. Take that on notice by all means.

**Answer:**

As outlined in the Explanatory Memorandum to the *Tobacco Plain Packaging Bill 2011* (the Bill), the definition of 'tobacco product' means that any product containing tobacco, no matter how small the amount, will fall within the scope of the TPP Act if it was manufactured for smoking, sucking, chewing or snuffing. This definition is based on the definition of 'tobacco products' in the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

There is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke. Smoke from cigars, like the smoke from cigarettes, contains toxic and cancer causing chemicals harmful to both smokers and non-smokers.

However, the US National Cancer Institute notes that cigar smoke has a higher level of cancer-causing substances, more tar, and a higher level of toxins; the larger size of most cigars and longer smoking time result in higher exposure to toxic substances; and some premium cigars contain the tobacco equivalent of an entire pack of cigarettes. Cigar smoking causes cancer of the oral cavity, larynx, esophagus, lung, and possibly the pancreas.<sup>1</sup>

There is a misperception that cigars are a “safe alternative”<sup>2</sup> because they are considered more natural and less harmful than cigarettes,<sup>3</sup> despite cigars delivering nicotine in concentrations comparable to cigarettes and smokeless tobacco.<sup>4</sup> Research by *Miller et. al.* noted that this misperception was consistent with the way cigars have been marketed.<sup>5</sup>

The tobacco plain packaging measure standardises packaging elements to reduce the appeal of tobacco products; increase the effectiveness of graphic health warnings on tobacco packaging; and reduce the ability of tobacco packaging to mislead consumers about the harmful effects of smoking or using tobacco products – including about the relative harmfulness of different tobacco products.

Research undertaken post implementation of plain packaging by *Miller et. al*<sup>6</sup> reported that there were several indications that plain packaging and new graphic health warnings were challenging the views that cigars were less harmful than cigarettes. As noted by *Miller et al*, this finding highlights the influence of plain packaging and graphic health warnings, and suggests a need to ensure tobacco control measures aimed at cigarettes include cigars.

Moreover, international experience suggests that a failure to apply tobacco control regimes in a comprehensive manner, encompassing all tobacco products, creates a regulatory gap which could be exploited by the tobacco industry, or could allow consumers to avoid measures associated with particular tobacco products (by switching to less-regulated products).<sup>7</sup>

---

1 National Cancer Institute, "Fact Sheet, Cigar Smoking and Cancer" (October 2010), available at: <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Tobacco/cigars> (last accessed 15 March 2017).

2 A. Brooks, E.M. Gaier Larkin, S. Kishore, S. Frank, "Cigars, cigarettes, and adolescents", *American Journal of Health Behaviour*, Vol. 32, No.6 (2008), 640.

3 US Department of Health and Human Services, Youth use of Cigars: Patterns of Use and Perceptions of Risk, Office of Inspector General June Gibbs Brown, (February 1999), pp. 19-22; R.E. Malone, V. Yergev and C. Pearson, "Cigar risk perception in focus groups of Urban African American Youth", *Journal of Substance Abuse*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (2001).

4 National Cancer Institute (United States), *Cigars: Health Effects and Trends, Tobacco Control Monograph No. 9* (1998).

5 Miller et al, "'You're made to feel like a dirty filthy smoker when you're not, cigar smoking is another thing all together': Responses of Australian cigar and cigarillo smokers to plain packaging", *Tobacco Control* Vol. 24 (2015), p. 7; See also R.J. O'Connor, A. McNeill, R. Borland, D. Hammond, B. King, C. Boudreau, K.M. Cummings, "Smokers' beliefs about the relative safety of other tobacco products: Findings from the ITC Collaboration", *Nicotine and Tobacco Research*, Vol. 9, No. 10 (2007) 1033.

6 Miller et al, "'You're made to feel like a dirty filthy smoker when you're not, cigar smoking is another thing all together.' Responses of Australian cigar and cigarillo smokers", *Tobacco Control* Vol. 24 (2015).

7 Delnevo, C. D. and M. Hrywna (2007). "A whole 'nother smoke" or a cigarette in disguise: How RJ Reynolds reframed the image of little cigars." *Am J Public Health* 97(8) 1368-1375; and Kostygina G, Glantz SA, Ling PM. "Tobacco industry use of flavours to recruit new users of little cigars and cigarillos." *Tobacco Control*, Vol. 0 (2014).