



THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS
FROM THE PRESIDENT

09 June 2004

The Secretary
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee
Suite S1 59
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Via Email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretary,

Re: Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee Inquiry Into Tobacco Advertising Prohibition

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) fully supports all the provisions of the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Preventing Smoking Related Deaths) Bill 2004; and of the exposure draft of the Tobacco Advertising Prohibition (Film, Internet and Misleading Promotion) Amendment Bill 2004.

As you are aware, there has been considerable public debate about the Private Members Bill that will make it a condition of eligibility that to receive public funding under the Electoral Act a political party should refuse donations from the tobacco industry.

The RACGP is heartened that Members on opposite sides of politics have jointly proposed and seconded the Private Members Bill (presented in Parliament by Duncan Kerr MP and seconded by Dr Mal Washer MP on 4 December 2003), that will make it a condition of eligibility that a political party should refuse donations from the tobacco industry to receive public funding under the Electoral Act.

There are many good reasons why all Australian politicians should support this Bill.

Tobacco may be a legal product but it is addictive and lethal - killing 19,000 Australians every year. It also costs the nation a staggering \$21 billion in health care and other costs – far more than the combined costs of illicit drugs and alcohol.

Australia has been at the forefront of tobacco control initiatives and has made significant inroads into tobacco consumption. However, we have grave concerns that senior Australian political leaders have become complacent about tobacco, claiming enough has been done, whilst spending far less per capita to reduce tobacco harm than most other OECD countries.

To end political donations of tobacco companies would not only send a strong message to tobacco companies, it would also show other countries and the Australian community that our Governments are serious about tobacco control. In particular, it will show that Australian political parties are not prepared to have tobacco companies make an investment in them.

This is an ethical, moral and economic issue that needs the full support of all of the political parties – not just opposition parties - if we are serious about reducing the single, largest preventable cause of death and disease in Australia. **Accordingly, we urge you to support the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Preventing Smoking Related Deaths) Bill 2004.**

The RACGP supports the Cancer Council 2003 ¹ statement that "Uptake of smoking is affected by social modelling and imagery created by years of tobacco company advertising and Hollywood movies. Programs to help adults to quit, restrictions on smoking in public places, and efforts to restrict access to and affordability of tobacco products and to outlaw commercial inducements to smoke have all been demonstrated to reduce smoking in children."

They recommend reducing commercial inducements for uptake of smoking by children by:

- Banning remaining forms of tobacco marketing, including through international broadcasting and emerging electronic media.
- Encouraging state governments to ban remaining retail promotion, particularly advertising and purchase inducements at point-of-sale.
- Encouraging State and Territory Governments to protect young people from retail promotion,
- including advertising at point-of-sale and purchase inducement, direct marketing and

The RACGP therefore supports the full provisions of the exposure draft of the Tobacco Advertising Prohibition (Film, Internet and Misleading Promotion) Amendment Bill 2004.

The RACGP is pleased to support the Australian Government in strengthening its legislative approach to tobacco control.

Yours sincerely



Professor Michael Kidd
President
Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

¹ VicHealth Centre for Tobacco Control. Tobacco Control: A Blue Chip Investment in Public Health - Overview document. The Cancer Council Victoria, Melbourne 2003.