

2 October 2012

Plain Packaging Consultation
Ministry of Health
PO Box 5013
Wellington

By email: tobacco@moh.govt.nz

Proposal to Introduce Plain Packaging of Tobacco Products in New Zealand

The New Zealand Medical Association (NZMA) is pleased to see that the Government is taking seriously the preventable harm caused by smoking and is actively taking steps to reduce the number of people in New Zealand who smoke. We view the proposed move to introduce a plain packaging regime for tobacco products as a positive move and one which we fully support.

In the face of restrictions having been placed on tobacco advertising and promotion, tobacco packaging has become the primary vehicle for communicating brand image. Unlike most other consumer products, cigarette packs remain with users once opened and are repeatedly displayed in social situations, thereby serving as a direct form of mobile advertising for the brand¹.

Packaging also serves as a link to other forms of tobacco advertising. For example, packs play a central role in point-of-sale marketing and help to increase the reach of “below the line” marketing activities, such as concerts and nightclub promotions.²

While the move to require all tobacco products to display health warnings is to be applauded, some brands are trying to minimise the impact of these by incorporating the colour schemes of graphic health warnings into the overall colour and design of the entire pack. This causes the warnings to become less salient since they blend in with the overall pack design.³

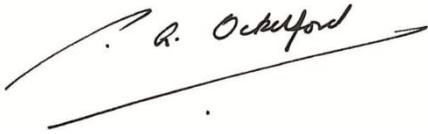
¹M A Wakefield, D Germain, S J Durkin, “How does increasingly plainer cigarette packaging influence adult smokers’ perceptions about brand image? An experimental study” *Tobacco Control* 2008;17:416–421

² Hammond, D ““Plain packaging” regulations for tobacco products: the impact of standardizing the color and design of cigarette packs” *Salud Publica Mex* 2010;52 suppl 2:S226-S232
<http://scielo.unam.mx/pdf/spm/v52s2/a18v52s2.pdf>

³ Above n1

The NZMA sees the move to plain packaging of cigarettes to be the next logical step in the overall campaign to reduce the number of people smoking by reducing the effectiveness of brand advertising.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr Paul Ockelford". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line that spans the width of the signature.

Dr Paul Ockelford
Chair, NZMA