

TOPIC PAPER 1 – 2009 – Plain Packaging Cigarettes

Dear Circle Members,

The Federal Government's Preventative Health Taskforce will most probably have handed down its recommendation on the introduction of plain packaging restrictions for cigarettes by the time you receive this.

However, we can all pray regarding the outcome.

This information was presented in the ABC Lateline Programme by Tony Jones with Reporter Steve Cannane in June.

Could Australia be the first country in the world to bring in plain packaging for cigarettes?

That's one of the recommendations expected to be handed to the Federal Government. With the ban on cigarette advertising in place, anti-smoking activists argue that the packet itself is the last place that tobacco companies can market their brand. If plain packaging is introduced the Federal Government can expect a High Court challenge from the tobacco industry, an industry that is not shy when it comes to protecting its business.

Professor Greg Craven, Australian Catholic University, expert in Constitutional Law says that tobacco companies are superb litigants. They use their lawyers extraordinarily well, naturally prepared to defend their business and spend a great deal of money. However, despite the quality of their lawyers, Professor Craven thinks that the tobacco industry would struggle to convince the High Court that plain packaging would violate international trade law or be an unfair acquisition of property.

Professor Simon Chapman of Sydney University suggests that beautifully designed boxes are designed to appeal to young people. Australia is the first country to ban tobacco advertising, smoking in the workplace and put retail packs off display. 163 countries have signed the framework convention on tobacco control to try and dramatically reduce tobacco use around the world.

Let us all pray for the success of this recommendation to Federal Government and the ultimate reduction of the effects on the health and cost of this addiction in the community.

In White Ribbon Bonds,

Mavis Gerrish,

Director of Education and Research