



22 December 2015

Hon Dr Jonathan Coleman
Minister of Health
Freepost
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Via email: Jonathan.Coleman@parliament.govt.nz

Dear Minister

Tobacco Plain Packaging

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) strongly supports the development and implementation of tobacco plain packaging legislation in New Zealand. Such measures would be invaluable in assisting New Zealand to meet its vision for a Smokefree Aotearoa in 2025.

As part of its commitment to standards and professionalism, RACS strives to take informed and principled positions on issues associated with the delivery of health services. The harm caused to the health of New Zealanders by the consumption of tobacco is one such issue.

Early in 2014, the Smoke-free Environments (Tobacco Plain Packaging) Amendment Bill had its first reading in New Zealand, proposing a legislative regime for standardised tobacco packaging. Similar measures were previously adopted by Australia in 2011 and evidence suggests that they have helped contribute to Australia's rapidly decreasing smoking rates.

As you will be aware, last week the Permanent Court of Arbitration unanimously found in favour of the Australian Government in the case brought against plain packaging by Philip Morris Hong Kong. This important decision helps ensure that plain packaging will remain in Australia and places them as a world leader in the fight against tobacco. Other countries such as France and Ireland have followed Australia's lead, both of which will enforce similar plain packaging laws from May 2016.

Like Australia's world first plain packaging regime, the New Zealand Government's vision for a Smokefree Aotearoa in 2025 is also world leading. Commendable progress has been made in regards to lowering smoking prevalence towards the target of less than 5%, but there is still a long way to go before this is met. Our Government needs to remain committed to its goal and show leadership by enacting plain packaging legislation.

Such measures should be a key component of the Government's plan to make Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 a reality. We would therefore urge you to continue progressing the Smoke-free Environments (Tobacco Plain Packaging) Amendment Bill, and promptly bring standardised packaging into law.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further comment from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons.

Yours sincerely

Professor Randall P Morton FRACS
Chair, New Zealand National Board