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HEALTH ORGANISATIONS FIGHT BACK AGAINST ANTI-PLAIN PACKAGING

National advertisement to run today – six major health organisations on board

Leading public health organisations are fighting back against a misleading campaign to block the plain packaging of cigarettes.

The Public Health Association of Australia, VicHealth, the Heart Foundation, the Australian Council on Smoking and Health, Cancer Council Australia and Action on Smoking and Health have placed an advertisement in *The Australian* today.

The ad depicts a puppet with big tobacco as the puppet master pulling the strings.

They accuse the tobacco companies behind the \$5 million TV, radio and print ad campaign, fronted by the newly formed Alliance of Australian Retailers, of attempting to con consumers about who is really leading the campaign.

The six health organisations believe that plain packaging will be an important strategy to reduce the number of children taking up smoking, and that it will save lives.

Public Health Association of Australia President Professor Mike Daube said Coles and Woolworths quickly distanced their companies from the campaign once it emerged it was driven by tobacco dollars.

“This is simply a campaign run to support the tobacco industry, and reputable Australian companies are embarrassed by any association with this lethal industry,” Prof. Daube said.

“We urge the community to support plain packaging, which has been recommended by national and international health authorities.”

VicHealth CEO Todd Harper added: “Health organisations don’t have the deep pockets of the tobacco industry, but we could not stand by and let the tobacco industry undermine the future health of Australians. As long as the tobacco industry is running this campaign, we will fight it.

“People who are watching these ads have every right to feel they are being duped by an industry that is desperate to hold on to one of the few remaining ways in which they glamorise their deadly product.

“If plain packaging of cigarettes won’t work, why spend millions hoodwinking the Australian public with a sham organisation opposing it?”

AVAILABLE FOR COMMENT

Prof. Mike Daube (PHAA), Todd Harper (VicHealth), Prof. Ian Olver (Cancer Council Australia), Maurice Swanson (Heart Foundation), Anne Jones (ASH).

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