



NEWS RELEASE

From the Office of the Premier of Victoria.

7th October 1987.

NEW TOBACCO BILL TO PROTECT THE YOUNG

The State Government today announced plans for dramatic and far reaching legislation to discourage smoking, particularly amongst young people.

The Premier, Mr. Cain, and the Minister for Health, Mr. White, said the legislation would ban some forms of tobacco advertising and that sporting and arts sponsorships would be replaced by a new body to be known as the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.

The Foundation will have a budget of \$23 million per annum generated by a new Health Promotion levy on cigarettes. The Foundation is a bold new approach to create a healthier community.

"For years the tobacco industry has poured millions of dollars into promoting a product that seriously affects public health," Mr. Cain said.

"The Foundation will use its resources to undo the damage of smoking and promote the positive image of a healthy lifestyle."

The plan, the most comprehensive tobacco control campaign yet introduced in Australia, centres on the need to reduce the number of young people encouraged to begin smoking through glamorous advertising and role modelling.

Mr. Cain said 80 per cent of adult smokers started before they were 16. If current trends continued more than 64,000 Victorian children would die prematurely of smoking related diseases.

"That is 64,000 smoking-related deaths that could have been avoided.

"That is 64,000 people who could live longer and more satisfying lives but for a habit sold to them in their youth.

"The burden these people unintentionally place on the public health system and the cost to the community in financial and social terms is enormous.

"We have an obligation to confront these appalling statistics in the same way other killers such as polio, diphtheria and the road toll have been confronted in the past.

"Through widespread campaigns and public education these diseases no longer pose a major threat to our community.

"We aim to do the same with smoking."

Mr. White said the Government legislation would not affect existing smokers.

"The object of the package is to reduce the recruitment of new smokers by reducing the association of smoking with social success, wealth, sex and sporting prowess," he said.

He said the key parts of the legislation were:

- Advertising** Outlawing certain forms of advertising (cinema, billboards, external displays, leaflets and give-aways). Point of sale advertising, newspapers and magazines have been excluded.
- Sponsorship** Prohibition of sponsorships of sporting and cultural events but with limited exemption for interstate and international events held in Victoria.
- Price increases** An increase in State tobacco franchise to 30 per cent - the same rate as NSW. This will increase retail prices about 4 per cent - well below the CPI. This will impact on young people who are price sensitive. In addition small packets of less than 20 cigarettes will be banned.
- The Foundation** The revenue from price increases (estimated at \$23 million) will go directly into a foundation administered by a board of eminent people from cultural, sporting and health fields. The fund will be used for health promotion and sponsorship of sporting and cultural events.

Mr. White said the issue of responsible cigarette advertising had been on the public agenda for at least 10 years since television and radio advertising were banned.

"The tobacco industry's effort of self-regulation has failed - they are not advertising to sway smokers from one brand to another, they are advertising to introduce new smokers to the habit.

"The Government has no alternative but to take the steps announced today."

Mr. Cain said reducing the incidence of smoking deserved a bipartisan effort in the same way action to reduce road deaths had been supported by Governments of both political persuasions.

He said the legislation would be introduced today and was hopeful it could be passed this session so the new foundation could start funding new projects from February next year.

An information kit can be obtained by ringing the Health Department Directline 616

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0610HEALTH

TOBACCO BILL - THE KEY POINTS

The Bill will prohibit certain types of cigarette advertising and sales of tobacco products, reduce the accessibility of tobacco to children and establish the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.

In particular :

1. Cinema advertising, outdoor advertising including billboards, and unsolicited leaflets advertising cigarettes will be prohibited. Existing billboards may remain until January 1, 1989.
2. Promotions such as competitions and free samples of tobacco products will also be banned.
3. Sponsorship of sporting and cultural events which involves an agreement to promote a tobacco product or company will also be prohibited. The Governor in Council will, however, have power to grant exemptions in limited circumstances. This will allow continuation of tobacco sponsorships of events of national or inter-national significance where alternative sponsorship cannot be found.
4. The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation established as a body corporate by the Bill will complement the above provisions. Funded by a levy of 5 per cent on wholesale tobacco sales paid directly into a trust fund, the Foundation will fund activity relating to the promotion of good health and the prevention and early detection of disease.

The Foundation will provide grants for research and health promotion programmes as well as providing an important avenue of sponsorship to sport and the arts.
5. The Bill consolidates various provisions concerning labelling of tobacco products with prescribed warnings.
6. The law on sales to a minor is simplified and removed from the Summary Offences Act, and a \$100 on the spot fine introduced for sale to people under 16.
7. Cigarette vending machines will be restricted to licensed premises.
8. Cigarettes must not be sold in packets of less than 20 after 1st July 1988.
9. Tobacco products other than for smoking, such as chewing tobacco will also be prohibited (with the exception of nasal snuff).

