



Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Health
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London SW1A 2NS

8th May 2013

Dear Jeremy,

Standardised “Plain” Packaging of Tobacco Products

We are writing to you on behalf of the Smokefree Action Coalition, an alliance of over 100 health and welfare organisations committed to reducing the harm caused by tobacco. We are extremely disappointed that the Queen's speech did not include proposals for legislation requiring tobacco products to be sold in standardised packaging despite having undertaken an extensive public consultation. The failure to bring forward legislation fatally undermines the Government's credibility on public health issues.

The Smokefree Action Coalition agrees with the Public Health Minister, Anna Soubry, who has publicly stated that she is persuaded by the evidence and that the time is now right for the debate to be had in parliament. The considered view of Public Health England, responsible for providing the government with impartial evidence-based information is that standardised packaging would be an effective intervention.

We urge the Government to publish the outcome of the consultation on this issue to facilitate the debate. Australia has already implemented standardised packaging in December 2012 and the government's own consultation has enabled a full examination of the evidence.

Legislation to reduce the harm caused by tobacco is popular with the public. Support for smokefree public places, including pubs and clubs rose from half to two thirds of the public in the 18 months before the legislation was introduced in December 2005 and has continued to rise since so that over 80% of the public now support the legislation, including a majority of smokers. Support for standardised packaging already stands at nearly two thirds of the public, with strong support across all the major political parties.

If the Government will not go ahead with the introduction of standardised packaging then Parliament should be allowed to decide on the issue in a free vote in this parliamentary session. We would like to remind you that, whilst in opposition, it was your party which took the lead in allowing the free vote on the legislation on smoking in enclosed public places, a vote which led to a majority of over 200 for comprehensive legislation.

Smokefree legislation has resulted in substantial public health benefits including significant reductions in admissions to hospital for heart attacks and asthma.

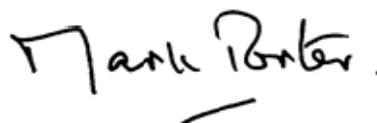
Measures to reduce smoking prevalence and exposure to secondhand smoke bring substantial economic benefits not just by reducing the burden on the NHS of smoking-related diseases, but also by reducing sickness, absenteeism and disability, all of which undermine productivity. This legislation will therefore not only improve public health but will also contribute to economic growth, one of your key priorities.

We would be happy to meet Ministers or your officials to discuss the matter further or to supply you with any further information or evidence you might require. We look forward to receiving your reply. We have written along the same lines to the Prime Minister.

Yours sincerely



Dr Clare Gerada
Chair of Council
Royal College of General
Practitioners



Dr Mark Porter
Chair of Council
British Medical Association



Dr Janet Atherton
President
Association of Directors of Public Health



Harpal Kumar
Chief Executive
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Professor Lindsey Davies
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Health



Simon Gillespie
Chief Executive
British Heart Foundation



Francine Bates
Chief Executive
The Lullaby Trust



Sir Richard Thompson
President
Royal College of Physicians



Dr Hilary Cass
President
Royal College of Paediatrics and
Child Health



Leon Livermore
Chief Executive
Trading Standards Institute



Dr Peter Carter
Chief Executive and General
Secretary
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Penny Woods
Chief Executive
British Lung Foundation



Deborah Arnott
Chief Executive
Action on Smoking and Health

Please respond c/o ASH, New House, 67-68 Hatton Garden, London EC1N 8JY