



AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF CONVENIENCE STORES

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The Hon Joe Helper MP
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9th December 2008

Dear Minister

Victorian Tobacco Control Strategy 2008-2013

I am contacting you to express my Association's concerns regarding proposals to remove tobacco products from customers' sight inside small shops in Victoria.

Last week I met with Dr Jim Hyde, Director of the Public Health Branch, and Christina Dickinson, Advisor to the Minister of Health to reinforce the issues raised in our submission. I was accompanied by two members of my association who are involved in the small format retailing.

In New South Wales recently we have seen the Government steam roll ahead with draconian measures that will have a devastating effect on small retailers in favour of the larger supermarkets and specialist tobacconists. I guarantee that if Victoria does the same there will be a massive negative impact on small business throughout the State. Health departments are, of course, under pressure from anti smoking lobby groups who see small businesses as easy targets in their attempts to ban tobacco from our society. Despite the fact that there is no evidence that tobacco display bans reduce the overall rates of smoking from anywhere in the world, and the obvious impact that they will have in terms of the operations of stores that employ small numbers of people, Health departments continue to fall for rhetoric from the anti smoking lobby. In a small shop tobacco sales can be as high as 40% of sales contributing around 30% of gross profit to the business owner.

I have enclosed our submission for your information, and a copy of an email I have sent to Jim and Christina this morning, in which I have shared some information from the United Kingdom where the Government has withdrawn proposals to restrict tobacco displays.

My understanding is that the Victorian Tobacco Control Strategy is to be adopted this month and I wanted to bring you up to date with concerns from small businesses if these unproven idealistic ambitions end up becoming law.

I am happy to come and meet with you in the New Year as I have some travel commitments from this weekend onwards. Best wishes for the festive season.

Yours sincerely

David Killeen
Executive Director