



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**World No Tobacco Day**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 28 May 2012**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Monday, 28 May 2012  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Neumann, Shayne, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr NEUMANN** (Blair) (11:53): Smoking is neither cool nor hip; smoking is neither attractive nor sexy. Smoking is costly to health and harmful to health. Karl Marx was wrong when he said that religion was the opiate of the masses. Tobacco is in fact the opiate of the masses, and lower socioeconomic areas of this country are areas that are so afflicted by high rates of smoking.

This federal Labor government are committed to reaching the COAG national healthcare agreement by reducing the smoking rate in this country to 10 per cent of the population by 2018 and by halving the Indigenous smoking rate. We have taken a lot of steps since we have been in power, including the 25 per cent excise increase, which we announced in April 2010. There has been a record amount of investment in antismoking social marketing campaigns using various forms of media and, of course, there was the legislation to restrict advertising of tobacco products on the internet. We also introduced plain packaging legislation which was passed. Plain packaging measures reduced the glamour and the sexiness of this product. It was not that long ago that we saw the likes of Bogie, Gable and others in black-and-white movies smoking and looking cool. That was all about the tobacco lobby using their efforts to glamorise smoking, and so plain packaging is an important measure that this government has undertaken.

The legislation, which was passed by the parliament unanimously after those opposite finally agreed to do so, said that this country really would send a message to the world that we are undertaking the toughest tobacco-advertising laws and the toughest laws in respect of this issue in the world. Australia is the first signatory and the first country in the world to commit itself to implementing the recommendations on plain packaging. It is a travesty and a tragedy that the tobacco companies, which have lobbied so hard for so long to keep people afflicted by this terrible scourge, have taken the case to the High Court. We are determined to defend our position. We believe it is good public policy and that there are good public health grounds for our legislation. We believe we are on firm constitutional and legal grounds accordingly.

Why is this so important? It is so important because about three million Australians are part of the 16.6 per cent of the population that smokes and, as other speakers have said, 15,500 Australians die of it every year. On average, people who smoke lose about 10 years of life expectancy compared to nonsmokers. And second-hand smoking is a serious health hazard. It contains more than 250 toxic substances, including 43 known carcinogens. The social costs to our country, including health costs of \$31.5 billion, have increased since 1998-99. That represents 56.2 per cent of the costs of all drug abuse, including alcohol as a drug. So smoking is a problem.

Tobacco companies cannot be trusted with the facts. For years and years Philip Morris and other tobacco companies hid the harm of smoking. Only in 2010 did the British American Tobacco website belatedly acknowledge the worldwide health problems. But for year after year we saw pictures of tobacco executives denying this and engaging in faulty research, claiming hand on heart that there was no impact and no addictive nature to tobacco. We know this is a terrible thing. I am very pleased that the Labor Party, of which I am a proud member, have for years said that we will not take donations from tobacco companies. Those opposite should also adopt a similar process and a similarly principled position. The coalition parties have accepted a combined \$3 million in donations from big tobacco and more than \$1.7 million of those were accepted after 2004, when Labor stopped accepting these poisonous donations. They need to kick the habit.

It is important that they set an example and that we all set an example. It is estimated, for example, that the impact of this scourge is that the death toll from the global epidemic of tobacco use could rise to eight million by 2030. Having killed 100 million people during the 20th century, tobacco use could kill one billion during the 21st century. That is why we need to take steps. I commend the member for Hindmarsh for his motion and suggest that those opposite should adopt our policy of not accepting donations. (*Time expired*)