

# NATIONAL INDEPENDENT RETAILERS ASSOCIATION

## Media Release

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### **Internet and black market tobacco sales set to soar**

NIRA today criticised the Prime Minister's announcement on tobacco retailing and packaging.

Peter Strong, CEO of NIRA, stated today "There is currently an enquiry into the tobacco retailing and submissions have been sought. The enquiry has not finished but an announcement has still been made. This makes the enquiry a complete waste of time and money."

Mr Strong added that "We all understand the negative health impact of smoking and we also believe that the government does not understand that this announcement will result in an increase in the sale of illegal tobacco such as 'chop chop' and sales over the internet. Already we are hearing of increases in the sale of cigarette blanks, cigarette papers and filters and of people who have gone straight to their computer to buy their tobacco products. This announcement appears to be designed to take the heat away from the climate change turn around."

Mr Strong also added "The impact on small retailers is also something that has not been considered. These people have a business and if that business is impacted by government policy then they need to be compensated. If the government is truly serious about dealing with the impact of smoking then they also need to consider the impact on owners and the families of small retailers who are affected by this policy."

NIRA believes that the approach to tobacco retailing needs better research and a better response or there will be an increase in the black market trade of tobacco products that do not have warnings and are not policed. The sales of tobacco products through the internet will also increase, and will also not be able to be policed. There also needs to be an impact statement made on the effects on small retailers of these measures.

Peter Strong further stated "It seems from the figures provided in the Prime Minister's announcement that we need people to keep smoking if we are to fund the latest increases in health care. If these smokers buy off the internet and from the black market then the smoking will continue with the health impacts of which we are very aware, but no money will go into government coffers. The strategy needs to be better considered and the retail industry needs to be involved in developing a response, particularly for small

retailers. Decreasing the level of smoking in Australia needs to be achieved through coordinated and considered responses not through emotive announcements and policy on the run.”

**Ends**

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