

# ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON SMOKING AND HEALTH

Chair: Stephen Williams MP  
Secretary: Bob Blackman MP  
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Vice-Chairs:  
Rt Hon Kevin Barron MP  
Baroness Finlay  
Baroness O’Cathain  
Lord Patel  
Lord Rennard  
John Robertson MP

13<sup>th</sup> February 2013

Dear Jeremy,

## **Standardised packaging of tobacco products**

We are writing to you on behalf of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Smoking and Health. As I am sure you are aware, it is now six months since the consultation on standardised packaging of tobacco products ended. We are writing to request that you now commit publicly to including in the forthcoming parliamentary session legislation to put all tobacco products in standard packs. Since the consultation closed, 78,500 children will have started smoking in the UK, a number which grows by 430 every day that we wait for a decision to be made.<sup>1</sup>

The introduction of standardised packaging will be a major advance for public health in the UK, helping to protect children from attractive and misleading packs,<sup>1</sup> before even more are lured into becoming addicted to a habit that kills half of its lifelong users.

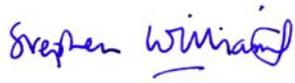
Smoking is a childhood addiction, not an adult choice, with two thirds of smokers starting smoking before the age of 18 and almost two in five starting before the age of 16.<sup>1</sup> The evidence shows, as set out in the systematic review published at the same time as the consultation, that standardised packaging will be effective in reducing these figures and therefore in preventing many thousands of premature deaths from smoking-related disease.

Standardised packaging in the UK would be easy and cheap to implement: retailers in Australia have found it straightforward to introduce the measure and standard packs also reduce the manufacturers’ costs of production. Tobacco sales will decline gradually but not overnight as the main impact will be on reducing uptake amongst young people and not on current smokers, so shops will have time to adapt.

Support for standard packaging is strong. A YouGov opinion poll has shown that 62% of the public support the measure, with only 11% opposing the measure. Even among smokers, more support the measure than not.<sup>1</sup> The public health community is also strongly supportive of standardised packaging<sup>1</sup> and increasingly concerned about the time being taken to make a decision.

We have copied this letter to all members of the Cabinet. We would be pleased to meet and discuss this issue with you at your convenience and we look forward to receiving your reply.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Williams MP, Kevin Barron MP and Bob Blackman MP  
Chair and Officers of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Smoking and Health