



Ms Julie Dennett
Committee Secretary
Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

11th July 2012

Customs Amendment (Smuggled Tobacco) Bill 2012

ASH Australia supports the Customs Amendment (Smuggled Tobacco) Bill 2012 (the Bill) as part of the Australian Government's strong commitment to implementing and enforcing a comprehensive tobacco control strategy.

We endorse the amendments, as larger penalties and enforcement programs are more likely to deter criminals from attempts to defraud the government by conveying or possessing smuggled tobacco products. The maximum term of ten years' imprisonment is a serious penalty but new offences are necessary to deter illegal trading in lethal, addictive products that kill 15,000 Australians a year.

Following a raft of very effective government health policies – the 25% tobacco tax increase and the introduction of the world's first plain tobacco packaging law – the tobacco industry made several legal and economic threats including misleading claims of unfounded increases in illicit tobacco trade. The industry has global access to sophisticated anti counterfeiting technology and an expert review of the evidence on plain packaging sets out under myths and facts why industry claims about the extent of illicit tobacco are exaggerated at www.cancervic.org.au/plainfacts/browse.asp?ContainerID=plainfacts-myths

We support Attorney General Nicola Roxon's statements in her second reading speech on 27th June 2012 that although tobacco smuggling does not represent a major threat in Australia, it is important to ensure that effective actions are taken to deter criminals from engaging in illegal tobacco activities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Bill.

Sincerely,

Anne Jones OAM
Chief Executive Officer, ASH Australia