

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017, 1 March 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000161

OUTCOME: 5 - Regulation, Safety and Protection

Topic: Cigarette Packaging

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Leyonhjelm, David

Question:

On 17 October 2014 Mr Smyth from the Department referred in Senate Estimates to a Cancer Council tracking survey of 'smoking habits'. A subsequent Freedom of Information release of the contract and contract variations with the Cancer Council revealed that the Final Report must cover and discuss the overall impact of packaging changes on outcome measures including 'consumption'.

1) Did the final report cover and discuss the overall impact of packaging changes on consumption?

a) If so, what was concluded in this regard?

b) If not, will the Government seek to recover any or all of the \$3 million paid to the Cancer Council given this omission?

2) What is the explanation for the conflict between the contract's reference to 'consumption', and the Cancer Council's statement of 3 June 2016 that the survey "was quite explicitly not designed to assess quitting success or change in smoking prevalence"?

Answer:

- 1) Yes. As required in the Funding Agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia and the Cancer Council Victoria, the final report included a discussion of the overall impact of packaging changes on key proximal outcome measures and more distal outcome measures including quit intentions, quit attempts and consumption.

The Funding Agreement required the final report to be presented as a series of papers submitted for peer-reviewed publication. The papers were published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) special supplement publication 'Tobacco Control' which is available at

http://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/24/Suppl_2#Specialcommunication

- a. The Article in the BMJ special supplement titled *Changes in use of types of tobacco products by pack sizes and price segments, prices paid and consumption following the introduction of plain packaging in Australia* noted:

The proportion of current smokers using roll-your-own (RYO) products fluctuated over the study period. Proportions using value brands of factory-made (FM) cigarettes increased from pre-plain packaging (21.4%) to plain packaging (PP) year 1 (25.5%; p=0.002)

and PP post-tax (27.8%; $p < 0.001$). Inflation-adjusted prices paid increased in the PP year 1 and PP post-tax phases; the largest increases were among premium FM brands, the smallest among value brands. Consumption did not change in PP year 1 among daily, regular or current smokers or among smokers of brands in any market segment. Consumption among regular smokers declined significantly in PP post-tax (mean=14.0, SE=0.33) compared to PP year 1 (mean=14.8, SE=0.17; $p=0.037$).

The National Tobacco Plain Packaging Tracking Survey was a cross-sectional survey undertaken each month between April 2012 and March 2014 of 400 smokers and recent quitters. A measure in the survey included recording numbers of cigarettes reported smoked per day, per week or per month by people who were smokers. It did not address or take account of any reductions in the numbers of smokers in the total population during that period.

b. No.

- 2) There is no conflict between the reference to “consumption” and the Cancer Council’s statement of 3 June 2016 that the survey “was quite explicitly not designed to assess quitting success or change in smoking prevalence, but rather focussed on the immediate impact of the legislation on perceptions of the pack, effects of health warnings and understanding of product harmfulness”. Consumption, prevalence and quitting success are different measures of smoking behaviour.