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## **Tobacco industry forced to 'turn over a new leaf'**

The introduction of the Federal Government's Tobacco Plain Packaging Bill 2011 to the Parliament today will stand as one of Australia's greatest public health achievements, Australian General Practice Network [AGPN] Chair, Dr Emil Djakic said today.

"The Gillard Government and the Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon should be congratulated for pursuing this tough approach to the restrictions placed on marketing and promoting tobacco products," Dr Djakic said.

"By taking away the tobacco industry's 'license' to promote and market cigarettes to the community, it will severely impact on the industry's ability to profit from a product that is associated with the deaths of up to 15,000 Australians every year from tobacco related illness," he said.

"Health promotion has been taken to another level in this country with the tobacco industry being forced to promote health warnings on the front and back of standard, non-descript packs.

"Marketing has been the industry's most powerful tool to target young and impressionable people to commit themselves to a product that causes addiction.

"Over time, the marketing and constant health warnings labelled on non-descript packs will start to reverse the attractiveness of smoking and reduce the number of people who become addicted to this product that kills and causes life-threatening diseases.

"General practitioners, nurses and allied health professionals who deal with Australians wanting to give up smoking will welcome these tough marketing measures that tie in with the plethora of anti-smoking campaigns and quit programs that are delivered through Divisions of General Practice and Medicare Locals.

"From a primary health care perspective, the plain packaging legislation which will encourage smokers to quit and help some to never start smoking, will also impact on population health measures, a key element of Medicare Locals.

"The savings to be made cannot be underestimated when smoking related illnesses cost the health system and economy an estimated \$30 billion every year.

"This is 'pay back' time with the tobacco industry finally being directed to constantly remind the community about the impact of its product at their expense," Dr Djakic said.

**For media interviews phone Karen Warner on 02 6228 0819 or 0438 179 520**