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## **Five-year celebration of WHO tobacco treaty presents new challenges to Government**

**Time for all obligations to be met, say health groups**

Five years after ratifying the World Health Organisation's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), Australia has a mixed report card on meeting its treaty obligations, five of the nation's leading independent health organisations said today.

Chair of Cancer Council Australia's Tobacco Issues Committee, Kylie Lindorff, said Australia deserved kudos as a regional leader in promoting the treaty, yet we fell short of key obligations such as a comprehensive ban on tobacco advertising and promotion.

"The tobacco industry has extraordinary guile for exploiting loopholes in advertising restrictions, with internet promotions, retail schemes, smoking depictions in film and video games ramped up to compensate for TV and radio ad bans," Ms Lindorff said.

"So, while Australia should be applauded for ratifying and promoting the FCTC, under our treaty obligations Australia should review outdated tobacco advertising legislation that does not protect young people from new methods of promoting smoking."

Maurice Swanson, the National Heart Foundation's tobacco control spokesperson, said the FCTC was making progress towards reducing the global tobacco burden, with 168 nations signed up to collective action against multinational tobacco companies.

"Australia's leadership in the region should be applauded, but we need to ensure Australia also meets all of its obligations domestically – which are generally consistent with the recommendations of its own Preventative Health Taskforce," Mr Swanson said.

"For example, Australia lags well behind international best practice in increasing tobacco tax, which is the best measure for reducing smoking among socially disadvantaged groups who bear the brunt of tobacco disease burden."

Also speaking on behalf of Action on Smoking and Health, the Australian Council on Smoking and Health and the Public Health Association of Australia, Ms Lindorff and Mr Swanson said the five-year FCTC celebrations coincided with an expected Government response to the Preventative Health Taskforce recommendations, providing an ideal opportunity for the Government to build on its tobacco control credentials.

"Preventative health has been central to the Government's policy reform agenda, so announcing a tobacco tax increase in the 2010-11 budget would be an ideal way to celebrate five years as a signatory and leader of the FCTC," Ms Lindorff said.

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