

Tobacco advertising ban in Australia

International background

The connection between cigarette smoking and lung cancer was already evident by the 1920s. It was, however, in the middle decades of the twentieth century that evidence of the links became more widely known and accepted.

The influential *British Medical Journal* published results of a study in 1950, and in 1956 the first report of the *British Doctors Study*, a study of some 34 000 doctors, linked smoking to both lung cancer and coronary thrombosis. The United States (US) Surgeon-General announced in 1964 that smoking caused lung cancer. In 1965 cigarette advertising on United Kingdom (UK) television was banned, and health warning labels became compulsory on US cigarette packets.

Tobacco advertising in Australia

The Australian Government had supported the tobacco industry through preferential tariffs since 1901, and since 1955 more directly through a research body, the Central Tobacco Advisory Committee (CA 407). Adopting a staged approach, the Menzies government introduced a voluntary tobacco advertising code for television in 1966.

In 1971 the advertising code was strengthened and extended to radio. By this time both the UK and US had banned cigarette advertising on radio and television. In 1972 the McMahon government introduced mandatory health warnings for radio and television tobacco advertisements.

The move to a ban on tobacco advertising

In 1973 the Whitlam government decided to phase out tobacco advertising. The change in government in 1975 meant the Fraser ministry faced a decision on whether to implement or delay the total ban. In a submission to Federal Cabinet, Health Minister Ralph Hunt outlined the medical evidence against smoking and its financial and health costs to the community.

In an opposing Cabinet submission, Post and Telecommunications Minister Eric Robinson argued that the government needed more time to evaluate the issues and to hear from interested parties.

Supported by the Department of Primary Industry and the Department of Industry and Commerce, he endorsed the tobacco, broadcasting and advertising industries.

Despite Robinson's arguments Cabinet determined to continue with the ban and it came into effect on 1 September 1976.

Record holdings

The National Archives holds numerous records relating to the tobacco industry and the lead-up to the ban on tobacco advertising. The table below lists a selection of these records and includes correspondence files, policy files, reports and Cabinet Office files.

Department of Health (CA 17)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Commonwealth/State action on smoking and lung cancer</u>	1963–67	A1851, 1964/711
<u>Commonwealth/State action on smoking and lung cancer</u>	1967–70	A1851, 1967/3819
<u>Commonwealth/State action on smoking and lung cancer</u>	1972	A1851, 1970/8051
<u>Harmful effects of smoking – correspondence between health authorities on advertising/publicity education</u>	1963–65	A1851, 1964/714
<u>Harmful effects of smoking – correspondence between health authorities on advertising/publicity education</u>	1965	A1851, 1965/1100
<u>Harmful effects of smoking – correspondence between health authorities on advertising/publicity education</u>	1965–67	A1851, 1965/2608
<u>Harmful effects of smoking – correspondence between health authorities on advertising/publicity education</u>	1965–69	A1851, 1968/829
<u>Report of United States Surgeon-General on smoking and health</u>	1964–67	A1851, 1964/715
<u>Smoking harmful effects correspondence with the US Health and Legislation authorities</u>	1970–73	A1851, 1970/2708
<u>Negotiations on the voluntary code of cigarette advertising</u>	1970–76	A1851, 1971/3488
<u>Commonwealth and State action on smoking and cigarette advertising</u>	1972–80	A1851, 1972/3201
<u>Commonwealth-State ministers conference on cigarette advertising</u>	1972	A1851, 1972/2542
<u>Smoking and health – background to departmental policy</u>	1972–73	A1851, 1972/5086

Prime Minister's Department (CA 12)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Parliamentary question regarding effect of cigarette smoking on personal health</u>	1964	A463, 1964/1209
<u>Control of advertising media and cigarette packet labelling</u>	1969–71	A463, 1969/1979

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (CA 1401)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Smoking and lung cancer – policy</u>	1954–69	A1209, 1965/6337 part 1
<u>Smoking and lung cancer – policy</u>	1969–72	A1209, 1965/6337 part 2
<u>Smoking and lung cancer – policy</u>	1972–77	A1209, 1972/6163
<u>Control of advertising media and cigarette packet labelling</u>	1971–77	A1209, 1972/6467
<u>Dangers of smoking</u>	1960–72	A5619, C547

Secretary to Cabinet/Cabinet Secretariat [I] (CA 3)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>National Health and Medical Research Council – statement on smoking and lung cancer</u>	1960–63	A4940, C3118
<u>Effect of smoking on public health – action taken by the Commonwealth</u>	1965	A4940, C4141

Cabinet Office (CA 1472)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Dangers of smoking – public health – action to be taken by the Commonwealth</u>	1969–72	A5882, CO654
<u>National warning against smoking campaign [Submission No. 425 refers]</u>	1973	A5931, CL493
<u>Cigarette advertising on radio and television [Submission Nos. 181, 185 and 204 refer]</u>	1976–80	A10756, LC322 part 1

How to find more information

Search the collection to find more records, including those on the anti-smoking campaign and individual Cabinet submissions and decisions. Searches using keywords such as 'tobacco', 'smoking', or 'cigarette' will find relevant records.