

Australia proposes tough cigarette packaging rules

April 7 2011, By KRISTEN GELINEAU , Associated Press

(AP) -- Tobacco companies in Australia will be forced to strip all logos from their cigarette packages and replace them with graphic images such as cancer-riddled mouths and sickly children under legislation unveiled Thursday - a move the government says will make Australia the world's toughest country on tobacco advertising.

The law would remove one of the tobacco companies' last methods of advertising by banning them from printing their logos, promotional text or colorful images on cigarette packs. Instead, brand names will be printed in a small, uniform font, and the packets will be a dull olive green - a color the government believes consumers will hate.

"This plain packaging legislation is a world first and sends a clear message that the glamour is gone - cigarette packs will now only show the death and disease that can come from smoking," Health Minister Nicola Roxon said in a statement. "The new packs have been designed to have the lowest appeal to [smokers](#) and to make clear the terrible effects that smoking can have on your health."

[Tobacco companies](#) have been fighting the legislation and threatening legal action since the government first announced its plan last year. The law would be phased in over six months, starting in January 2012.

The legality of the measure and whether it violates trademark laws is a matter of debate among experts. British American Tobacco, which produces several cigarette brands including Winfield, Dunhill and

Benson, will probably launch legal action against the government over the legislation, spokesman Scott McIntyre said.

"What company would stand for having its brands, which are worth billions, taken away from them?" McIntyre said. "A large brewing company or fast [food chain](#) certainly wouldn't and we're no different."

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Citation: Australia proposes tough cigarette packaging rules (2011, April 7) retrieved 30 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-04-australia-tough-cigarette-packaging.html>

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