

Australia launches world-first plain cigarette pack laws

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Australia introduced world-first plain packaging laws for cigarettes into parliament Wednesday, vowing not to bow to big tobacco's "intimidation tactics" and legal threats.

Health Minister Nicola Roxon said the laws, which will have to be debated by MPs before being passed, would see Australia become the first country to go down this path.

"Introducing this legislation today I think shows that the big tobacco's intimidation tactics have not worked. Our government won't be deterred from taking this action," Roxon told reporters.

"And we believe that we are on very strong ground -- although this is a world first, taking this action -- and are determined to proceed with it."

Canberra faces a bruising intellectual property row with global tobacco giants over the plan to remove all logos from [cigarette packets](#) and mandate they be drab colours with graphic [health warnings](#) in a bid to limit smoking.

The Asian arm of [Philip Morris](#) launched legal action against the plan last month seeking "significant" compensation, and British American Tobacco has warned it stands ready to follow suit.

But Roxon said Australia would press ahead with a plan being closely watched by countries mulling similar moves, saying she was determined

to almost halve the proportion of [Australians](#) who smoke to 10 percent by 2018.

About 19 percent of citizens are thought to be [smokers](#), killing around 15,000 people and costing the economy more than Aus\$30 billion (US\$32 billion) every year in health and other expenses.

"We're taking this action because tobacco is not like any other legal product. When used as intended it is lethal," said Roxon.

"We will reduce the number of people that take up smoking to start with (and) we will take away any of the remaining glamour that might be attached to smoking."

Although Australia would be the first country to mandate plain packaging, New Zealand, Canada and Britain have considered a similar approach and are watching developments.

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