

Australia fumes over smoking kangaroos

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The Australian government on Friday hit out at British American Tobacco for using images of kangaroos to sell its cigarettes in Europe, telling the company to "get your hands off our icons".

BAT, which is battling Canberra over moves towards plain packaging in Australia, is selling its Winfield brand overseas with a picture of a kangaroo on the front and a map of Australia on the back.

It is also using the slogan "An Australian Favourite" and Attorney-General Nicola Roxon, the former health minister, is not amused.

"I think many Australians are going to be outraged that a big tobacco company all the way round the world is using Australia's healthy lifestyle to market their deadly products," she told reporters.

"What I think it's really showing is the sneaky levels that tobacco companies will go to to encourage people to buy their products."

Australia is set to be the first country to mandate plain packaging to reduce smoking rates under a groundbreaking law passed in November.

Under the legislation, all [tobacco products](#) sold in Australia must be in in drab, olive-brown packets with large, graphic [health warnings](#) showing diseased body parts and sick babies from December 1 this year.

Brand imagery will also be banned, sparking a furious response from the major [tobacco companies](#) who have launched a constitutional challenge

to the High Court, claiming it infringes their [intellectual property rights](#).

Despite her dismay at Australian images being used to sell cigarettes in Europe, Roxon admitted there was little she could do about it.

"Whilst it's probably unlikely that we can do anything to stop these packs being sold in Europe, we certainly can call on British American Tobacco, as the Australian public can, to say 'get your hands off our icons'," she said.

"Don't use them to sell your product which actually has nothing to do with Australia.

"They are trying to imply to the European market that this is something that Australia promotes, that this is something that Australians prefer, that this somehow is connected with our [healthy lifestyle](#)."

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