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**BIG TOBACCO AND NATIONAL RETAIL ASSOCIATION RECEIVE
 2021 DIRTY ASHTRAY AWARD**

Big Tobacco and the National Retail Association have jointly been awarded the AMA/ACOSH 2021 Dirty Ashtray Award for their relentless attempts to undermine Australia’s tobacco control programs.

Ahead of World No Tobacco Day the award has been presented to Philip Morris Australia (Limited), British American Tobacco Australia (Limited) and Imperial Tobacco Australia (Limited) and the National Retail Association, by AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid today in Perth.

Dr Khorshid said decades of public health initiatives which had put Australia at the forefront of smoking reform were at risk.

“These companies continue to market the world’s most lethal consumer product, that each year kills over 20,000 Australians,” he said.

Dr Khorshid urged all governments to build on Australia’s success over the last 40 years by focusing on proven and evidence-based strategies.

“The tobacco industry uses its economic power, lobbying and manipulation of the media to discredit research and influence governments to minimise restrictions on the marketing and availability of tobacco.

“They aggressively oppose all effective tobacco control policies, such as curbs on advertising, graphic health warnings, increases in tobacco tax, and plain packaging,” Dr Khorshid said.

“They are currently spending millions of dollars to persuade our politicians to support the introduction of nicotine e-cigarettes. Nicotine vaping products are growing in popularity among young Australians. Meanwhile the National Retail Association has consistently promoted the policy position of the tobacco industry to make nicotine e-cigarettes available as an ordinary consumer item.

“The AMA is highly concerned about the uptake of these products among young Australians, especially because of the clear evidence that young people who use vaping products are much more likely to go on to smoke tobacco. Philip Morris, British American Tobacco, and Imperial Tobacco all own e-cigarette brands.

“Big Tobacco is also ruthlessly exploiting social media platforms for promotion of their products and using corporate social responsibility activities to polish their tarnished image. They’re undermining the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control to which all Australian governments are signatories.”

Dr Khorshid said the AMA and ACOSH wanted to see the federal government drive a stronger comprehensive national program including:

- A sustained public education program,
- A ban on tobacco advertising, lobbying and political donations,

- Expansions of smoke-free workplaces and public places,
- A reduction in the number of retail tobacco outlets,
- Hold the tobacco industry accountable for healthcare costs,
- Regulate the contents and design of tobacco products to significantly reduce appeal and addictiveness.

“These commitments by the federal government could reduce the prevalence of smoking among adults to less than 5 per cent and among teenagers to less than 2 per cent and enable the phasing out of the commercial sale of cigarettes by 2030,” he said.

He said the most effective measure the federal government could take was to run a new hard-hitting national mass-media, anti-smoking campaign during this parliamentary term.

“We are calling on the Health Minister Greg Hunt to spend \$20 million in funding which has been set aside to revive Australia’s highly effective National Tobacco Campaign. It’s a tiny portion of the projected revenue of \$15.06 billion dollars which will go to the federal government from tobacco excise this financial year, Dr Khorshid said.

The Dirty Ashtray Award is presented each year in conjunction with the National Tobacco Scoreboard by the AMA and the Australian Council on Smoking and Health (ACOSH), to put a spotlight on governments, industry, and organisations, which fail to do enough to stop people smoking.

Judges from ACOSH, the Cancer Councils and the National Heart Foundation also allocate points to governments in various categories, including legislation, to track how effective each has been at combating smoking in the previous 12 months.

This year’s summary shows that the best performing jurisdiction is Queensland, and the worst performing is the Northern Territory.

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