

Media Release

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Cancer Council applauds US ban on menthol in tobacco, calls for Australia to follow

Cancer Council has commended the US Food and Drug Administration's decision to ban menthol flavouring of tobacco products and has called on the Australian Government to do the same as part of its landmark review of [tobacco control legislation](#).

Chair of Cancer Council Australia's national Tobacco Issues Committee, Libby Jardine, said the FDA's decision, announced overnight, followed years of petitioning from independent health groups including the American Medical Association, African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council and Action on Smoking and Health (US) and should lead to reductions in smoking-caused disease.

Ms Jardine said Australia was rightly recognised as a world leader in tobacco control and that "we should match strong action elsewhere, provided it is supported by the evidence.

"We've had strong evidence for years that flavouring agents such as menthol attract new smokers and make it more difficult for addicted smokers to quit," she said.

"That evidence has strengthened in recent years, including studies in the US and Australia that show flavours such as menthol are increasingly exploited to attract new smokers – even more so since policy measures such as plain packaging have been an effective deterrent.

"The only losers in this decision will be the tobacco companies, who have opposed it at every step, as they do with any measure that will reduce the seductive appeal of tobacco use to both new and addicted users."

Ms Jardine said Australia's current national review of tobacco control legislation was an ideal mechanism for prohibiting menthol, as it included a comprehensive review of relevant policy instruments.

The Tobacco Plain Packaging legislation and regulation could be amended to prohibit menthol and other flavouring agents designed to make smoking attractive to new smokers and harder to quit for addicted smokers.

"Greg Hunt should be congratulated for committing to a 10% national smoking target and has since overseen a range of reforms to achieve this commitment, including the legislative review and a new 10-year National Preventive Health Strategy," Ms Jardine said.

"Banning flavours that attract new smokers and undermine quit attempts among addicted smokers is a strong, evidence-based action to take as part of that vision."

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