FACT SHEET: TOBACCO CONTROL

1. Last year, the Ministry of Health (MOH) announced that it was proposing to bar shops from displaying cigarette packs for sale and would be seeking the public's views. There was strong support from the general public during the consultation. The Health Promotion Board (HPB) and the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) have also conducted trade engagement sessions with retailers and associations to solicit their view. In general, although they expressed concern regarding the potential impact on their businesses, they understood MOH's rationale for introducing the ban.

2. MOH will be moving ahead with the point of sale display (POSD) ban. This will be carried out through an amendment, by end 2015, of the Tobacco (Control of Advertisements and Sale) Act. Tobacco retailers will be given 12 months after the new legislation is gazetted to comply with the POSD ban requirements. Tobacco retailers will be required to use storage devices to keep tobacco products out of direct line of sight of patrons within the stores. We will work with the different types of retailers to address these concerns during implementation. We will assist smaller retailers where necessary.

3. MOH will continue to work with our partners in the public, private and people sectors for a multi-pronged approach to address tobacco use. This involves tobacco control policies, tobacco taxation, public education and empowerment, partnerships and capacity building, and the provision of quit smoking services in a supportive environment.

Why tobacco use is an ongoing concern

4. Tobacco is the single greatest cause of preventable death globally. Tobacco use leads most commonly to diseases affecting the heart and lungs, with cigarette smoking being a major risk factor for heart attacks, strokes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and cancer (particularly lung cancer, and cancers of the larynx and mouth, and pancreatic cancer).

Smoking Prevalence in Singapore

5. Smoking prevalence has increased from 12.6% in 2004 to 14.3% in 2010. The increase is especially significant for smokers aged 18 to 29, from 12.3% in 2004 to 16.3% in 2010.

Background on Tobacco Control Efforts in Singapore

6. Singapore's first legislation on smoke-free public places was implemented in 1970 and has been subsequently revised over the years to better protect citizens from second-hand smoke. Singapore was the first Asian country to ban tobacco advertisements in 1971.

7. In Aug 2004, Singapore became the first country in Asia to implement requirements for all cigarette packets to bear graphic pictures warning smokers
about the dangers of smoking. In 2009, Singapore became the first in the world to mandate compulsory labelling of all Singapore duty paid cigarette with “SDPC” on the individual sticks. This move is a measure to visibly differentiate duty paid cigarettes from contraband cigarettes.

8. As a result of the National Tobacco Control Programme, Singapore has one of the lowest smoking rates in the world.

Recent Efforts in Tobacco Control

9. The ban on misleading terms on tobacco product packaging, the lowering of cigarette tar and nicotine limits, and the replacement of a new set of Graphic Health Warnings were implemented on 1 Mar 2013. At Budget 2014, it was announced that tobacco taxes were increased by 10%.

What is the POSD Ban?

10. Tobacco product displays are considered by the World Health Organization’s (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) as a form of tobacco advertisement. A ban on the POSD of tobacco products is therefore a natural progression of the tobacco advertising ban. This is in line with international best practices in countries such as Australia, New Zealand and the UK which have progressive tobacco control measures.

Local Study on POSD

11. A local study conducted by the Health Promotion Board via a survey questionnaire among 1,300 respondents aged 18 - 69 years, with about equal proportion of smokers and non-smokers. The study shed insights on the perceptions and influence of POSD on smokers and non-smokers.

12. Key findings of the Survey as follows:

- 20% of non-smokers reported that POSD aroused curiosity in smoking
- 43.5% of smokers consider POSD attractive
- 46% of smokers aged 18 – 29 years bought tobacco products on seeing POSD
- 50% of smokers aged 18 - 29 years were tempted to smoke on seeing POS displays

Rationale for POSD ban

13. Research studies have shown that POSD of tobacco products is not only attractive but also influences purchasing behaviours. Hence, POSD bans are aimed at decreasing exposure of non-smokers, in particular vulnerable populations such as youth, to the advertising effect of POSD and denormalising the use of tobacco
products. In Canada, Iceland and Ireland, implementation of a POSD ban was associated with a decrease in smoking.

14. Together with other tobacco control measures that are already in place, POSD ban will potentially lead to a decrease in smoking initiation rates and reduce impulse purchases among smokers who are trying to quit.

**Public consultation exercise for POSD ban**

15. MOH conducted a public consultation exercise to seek views on a proposed POSD ban of tobacco products in June 2013. HPB and HSA also conducted trade engagement sessions with retailers and associations in July 2013. For the public consultation exercise, 73% of respondents not related to the tobacco industry\(^1\) supported the POSD ban. Unsurprisingly, most respondents related to the tobacco industry opposed the move. In further trade engagement sessions, tobacco retailers generally preferred not to have a POSD ban, but expressed understanding towards the measure, and asked for more time to carry out the implementation.

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\(^1\) Tobacco retailers, tobacco associations, wholesalers, business councils etc. in the tobacco industry