



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Former Federal Health Minister presented with major tobacco control award**

A former Federal Health Minister who implemented Australia's tobacco plain packaging legislation has been named this year's winner of the prestigious Bob Elphick Medal.

The Honourable Nicola Roxon accepted the 2017 award, which recognises a person who has made an outstanding contribution to tobacco control in Australia, at a breakfast in Perth today.

The award was presented to Ms Roxon by Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson AO, Governor of Western Australia (and Patron of ACOSH).

Ms Roxon, Chairman of Cancer Council Australia, said she was honoured to accept the award.

"We all know that tobacco is such a scourge on our community that constant and refreshed effort is needed to limit the harm caused to Australians," she said.

"My work on tobacco control was only possible because of the hard work and other efforts of many public health leaders in the past - this award recognises some of that beneficial continuity."

Ms Roxon, who was the Federal Health Minister from 2007 to 2011, said the Labor Party, had been committed to taking a preventive approach to health.

"When elected, we quickly established a Preventative Health Task Force asking them to advise on next steps the Government could take in battling tobacco, alcohol and obesity," she said.

"Plain packaging came to my attention in this report - and was really a no-brainer - as the next great step we could take in limiting the glamour and appeal of tobacco."

Australia was the first country to introduce tobacco plain packaging laws in 2012.

Ms Roxon said she was confident smoking levels in Australia would continue to decrease.

"The data is showing a strong impact from the introduction of plain packaging here in Australia - and its full benefits will be even stronger long term," she said.

“It is wonderful to see this measure now also being implemented around the world - in the UK, France and Norway, for example, and soon to be in many other countries like New Zealand and Hungary.”

ACOSH President Maurice Swanson congratulated Ms Roxon on her achievements in the area of tobacco control and support of other countries implementing plain packaging legislation.

“I can say with confidence that the introduction of world-leading plain packaging legislation – spearheaded by Ms Roxon - has seen an impact on the use of tobacco in Australia,” he said.

“There is good evidence it has reduced the appeal of tobacco products and increased the effectiveness of Australia’s dramatic health warnings.

“In fact, an independent evaluation has shown that plain packaging was responsible for a 0.55 percentage point drop in the prevalence of smoking in Australia in the 34 months following its implementation.

“It is these sort of results which we are acknowledging today.”

Plain packaging legislation has been adopted in eight countries and is under consideration in at least 15 other jurisdictions.

The Elphick Medal is awarded annually in memory of Dr Bob Elphick, a pioneering chest physician who was President of the Australian Council on Smoking and Health (ACOSH) from its inception in 1971 and remained a driving force in tobacco control and advocacy throughout his life.

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**For more information please contact:**

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- BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION-

### **The Honourable Nicola Roxon**

Nicola Roxon was the Labor Member for Gellibrand from 1998-2013. From 2007-2011 she was the Minister for Health and Ageing where she oversaw a \$64 billion annual budget and initiated major reforms to public hospitals, primary care and health prevention. As Australia’s first female Attorney-General (2011-2013), Ms Roxon was responsible for all Commonwealth laws, the federal courts, family law, counter terrorism measures and ASIO.

Ms Roxon has received nine national and international awards related to public health and tobacco control including the Sidney Sax Public Health Medal, the Nigel Grey Award and the World Health Organization Director-General's Special Recognition Award.

She is currently the Non-Executive Director of Dexus, Bupa & Lifestyle Communities and Chairman of Cancer Council Australia, the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board, the Bupa Remuneration Committee and the Sir Zelman Cowen Centre at Victoria University.

Ms Roxon is the Patron of BreastWest Foundation.