

INDUSTRY WATCH

All their own words...

On 11 November 1992, on the eve of the Australian government's decision to ban all remaining forms of tobacco advertising and sponsorship, a tobacco growers' representative had a few candid words to say about the effect of advertising bans on the national ABC broadcast morning programme "AM". [The following excerpt is taken verbatim from a transcript of the interview, except for the deletion of a few words to improve syntax and grammar.] - sc

Programme host: Colin McCormack is Chairman of the Tobacco Growers Council of Victoria and he also grows tobacco on 30 acres in the Buckland Valley near Bright in the foothills of the Victorian Alps. According to Mr McCormack, Australia's tobacco-growing industry earns \$80 million a year and employs 68000 people.* [Our reporter] asked Mr McCormack if the original proposal to ban tobacco sponsorship of sport would have meant job losses in the industry.

Colin McCormack: Yes, it would have, just in the advertising of that industry and it would flow back to the growing industry, yes.

Reporter: How does that reconcile with the statements in the past by the tobacco companies that advertising isn't about selling more cigarettes but it's about brand identification and convincing consumers to change brand?

McCormack: I think it's a very accurate statement by the manufacturers. It is about changing brands and I think it's been proven overseas that it doesn't make people start smoking but more to changing brands.

Reporter: If advertising is about convincing people to change brands, not about whether to smoke, how is [an ad ban] going to affect the volume of tobacco sold?

McCormack: If they ban advertising completely, it will affect the consumption of tobacco because the brand names won't be there for people to...

Reporter: So people won't know about smoking at all because there won't be any advertising. Is that what you're saying?

* This figure comprises those directly employed by the industry, but also shopkeepers who sell tobacco along with other merchandise. It does not include oncologists, surgeons, cardiologists, or undertakers, many of whom derive significant income from smoking. - sc



"I got the south forty in lung cancer and the back spread in esophagus and larynx ..."

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McCormack: Oh no, people will continue to smoke. You've got, say, 30% of the population who smoke marijuana, and there's no advertising of marijuana.

Reporter: So what point is there for tobacco advertising? People are still going to smoke and it's really only aimed at people changing brand. How will it hurt the grower if there's no advertising?

McCormack: I think that's up to the manufacturers and I think it's just in a free enterprise world that they should be allowed to advertise.

Reporter: So it comes down to freedom of choice. It's really got nothing to do with the maintenance of the industry or the protection of the income of the growers.

McCormack: No, it's just the freedom of choice for the people out there who are the smokers and also the manufacturers.

Reporter: Finally Mr McCormack, there is a seemingly strong correlation between tobacco and tobacco- or smoking-related deaths. Does that concern the industry and you as a grower? What do you make of those arguments?

McCormack: I make no comment on that. I just grow tobacco and I'm on the growing side and not on that side.