

**Media Release**

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## Ministry of Health ‘playing games’ with submissions

**The release of only a selection of submissions on the tobacco plain packaging consultation raises questions about the integrity of the process says one of New Zealand’s leading retail organisations.**

The New Zealand Association of Convenience Stores (NZACS) is responding to the uploading of only ‘substantive’ written submissions on the Ministry of Health’s website and is asking what happened to almost 4,000 submissions from retailers who are opposed to plain packaging of tobacco products.

“NZACS knows that nearly 4,000 individual retailers expressed their opposition to a measure they feel will do little aside from increase costs onto their businesses. This is a huge number representing about 71% of the approximately 5,600 retailers that sell tobacco in New Zealand,” says Roger Bull, NZACS Chairman.

NZACS called for the public release of submissions in November, but now we find only a small percentage of submissions have actually been released. **“What happened to the 19,698 other submissions received by the Ministry, each individually signed by someone?** Are these simply discarded and viewed as unimportant because they were not on a pre-printed form,” questioned Mr Bull.

“We have also seen that a number of submissions that have been released purportedly from different organisations but are authored by the same person and with identical content which begs the question about the methodology used to categorise or evaluate submissions,” says Mr Bull.

“If it’s good enough to release multiple submissions from one individual, then why isn’t good enough to release submissions from other individual submitters?”

“We believe there needs to be full transparency of the submissions otherwise the perception is that the Ministry is playing games with the consultation process,” Mr Bull said.

[ENDS]

**For further comment;**

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**BACKGROUND NOTES TO EDITOR**

- NZACS is a leading trade association representing the interests of over 750 retailers and suppliers within the convenience retailing industry in New Zealand.

- NZACS produces industry research including an annual survey of retailer performance across the convenience retail sector.
- NZACS provides education and development opportunities for member employees in the industry, including an annual development programme for aspiring retail and supplier company leaders.