

THE HON NICOLA ROXON

Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*

The Honourable Nicola Roxon is an internationally recognised leader in preventative health, receiving national and international awards in recognition of her public health work, particularly tobacco reforms.

After graduating with the Supreme Court Prize from the University of Melbourne, Ms Roxon worked as an industrial lawyer, union official and High Court Associate. In 1998, she was elected to the seat of Gellibrand in Victoria and was a member of the Australian Parliament until her retirement in 2013. Since 2014, Ms Roxon has built a successful career as a non-executive director, including Chair of Cancer Council Australia, where she successfully united efforts of the state-based Cancer Councils and forged a national plan for cancer control.

As the former Minister for Health and Ageing, Ms Roxon established the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, the National Preventative Health Taskforce, and the National Health Preventative Agency, undertaking major reforms to Australia's public hospital, primary care, and preventative health systems.

In 2011, acting on advice from public health experts, Ms Roxon developed a calculated policy response to take on Big Tobacco and introduced the world's first legislation for plain packaging of tobacco. Designed to remove the tobacco industry's last channel for advertising, the Tobacco Plain Packaging Act was a game-changer in this country's already strong legacy of legislative leadership in preventing smoking related disease. It reduced the appeal of products to consumers, made health warnings more effective, and removed the ability for packaging to mislead consumers about the harmful effects of tobacco.

Ms Roxon became Australia's first female Attorney-General in 2011. In this capacity she led the Federal Government's successful defence against two constitutional challenges to the plain packaging legislation in the High Court of Australia. Other international challenges to the legislation, by the World Trade Organization and the Permanent Court of Arbitration, were also resolved in the Australian Government's favour. The impact of plain packaging in Australia has been significant. A review commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Health found that between December 2012 and September 2015, packaging changes alone were responsible for over 100,000 fewer smokers across the country, and Cancer Council surveys have found a significant drop in cigarette brand appeal and greater impact of health warnings.

Ms Roxon's leadership and advocacy were instrumental in the successful introduction and implementation of this life-changing Act which now forms a key component of the World Health Organization's strategy for combating harm from tobacco. Australia led the way in shifting the balance of power between governments and the tobacco industry. Presently, 42 countries and territories are actively moving ahead with plain packaging, with 25 having adopted the measure, 3 having it in practice, and 14 in the process of implementation. Ms Roxon's outstanding contribution to world health has been widely recognised with awards including national organisations in the USA, Australia and New Zealand and the World Health Organization.

Since Ms Roxon's departure from politics she has used her experience in government, public policy, and community engagement in business and not-for-profit sectors. Ms Roxon has established a career as a non-executive director with organisations that have a social or health related focus including, and not limited to, industry super fund, HESTA, VicHealth, Lifestyle Communities, HealthJustice Australia, Cancer Council, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, and was recently announced as the Chair of Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

The Hon Nicola Roxon is recommended for the award of Doctor of Laws (*honoris causa*) in recognition of her exceptional and courageous global leadership in health policy.