**Inquiry from the Pacific Cigar Company NZ on 28 June 2016**

The Ministry has received an inquiry from Pacific Cigar Company NZ requesting clarification of the process steps relating to the consultation on the draft regulations and the finalisation of the regulations, and highlighting specific issues that are related to cigar imports and packaging. The Pacific Cigar Company NZ also requested to meet with the Ministry staff to discuss the regulations relevant to cigars.

**The Ministry’s response**

The information you have provided about the practical implications you see arising from the proposal to standardise the quantities in which cigars may be sold is exactly the sort of specific, detailed feedback the Ministry is seeking (so that we can recommend any necessary changes for the final regulations).

We also note that you have suggested there may be other aspects of the regulations that could be improved.

Please note that no final decisions will be taken on the contents of the regulations until after the consultation has closed and all submissions have been considered and taken into account. There is definitely scope for change where a strong case can be made.

In terms of your request for a meeting at the earliest possible opportunity, please note that in line with New Zealand's obligations and commitments under Article 5.3 of the FCTC, the Ministry should only interact with the tobacco industry where and when necessary for the effective regulation of tobacco products.

Once we have considered the submissions, we will be in a position to make arrangements for meetings that are necessary to address matters raised in submissions.

We will closely consider all substantive issues raised in submissions, and consider possible changes to the regulations.

Where a strong and compelling case is made in a submission, there may be no need for further elaboration before we make recommendations to Government to agree to those changes.

Where there is sufficient detail in a submission to make the case that there is a substantive issue to address, but there remains doubt as to how best to address the issue, then we will make any necessary arrangements for meetings with technical product experts and affected parties to clarify those matter(s). At this stage, it does appear likely we will wish to meet with at least some affected parties to discuss issues with respect to the regulation of cigars. However, we are not yet in a position to make arrangements for any such meeting.

In the meantime we would encourage you to provide any further information you wish us to consider on the issues you have raised (for example on the implications of introducing standardised packaging for the range of possible numbers in which cigars may be sold, if these numbers were not to be standardised as currently proposed).

We would also encourage you to identify any other issues of concern and submit on these with specific detail before the consultation period closes.