

Tuesday 28th May 2013

Ireland set to become second country in the world to introduce plain pack cigarettes

“It is with great pleasure that I announce, ahead of World No Tobacco Day on Friday, that I have received Government approval to begin the process of introducing standardised/plain packaging of tobacco products in Ireland. While many arguments will be made against such an introduction, I am confident that this legislation will be justified and supported purely by the fact that it will save lives” stated Minister Reilly today.

As you are aware, smoking places an enormous burden of illness and mortality on our society with over 5,200 people dying every year from tobacco related diseases – one in two of all smokers will die from their addiction.

To replace the smokers who quit, the tobacco industry needs to recruit fifty new smokers in Ireland every day just to maintain smoking rates at their current level. Given that 78% of smokers in a survey said they started smoking under the age of 18, it's clear that the tobacco industry focuses on children to replace those customers who die or quit.

The theme of World No Tobacco Day is **“Ban tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship”**. “The introduction of standardised packaging will remove the final way for tobacco companies to promote their deadly product in Ireland.” the Minister said. Cigarette packets will no longer be a mobile advertisement for the tobacco industry. Research has shown that packaging has been used effectively to reassure consumers about the risks of smoking for example with the use of the words “mild” or “light” on packs in the past. Research has also shown that imagery and colours are also used to influence consumers. Pack shape and design are also key measures with packets available that resemble a lipstick box.

Standardised packaging of tobacco products will remove all form of branding – trademarks, logos, colours and graphics. The brand name would be presented in a uniform typeface for all brands and the packs would all be in one plain neutral colour.

There is strong evidence that standardised packaging will:

- Increase the effectiveness of health warnings;
- Reduce false health beliefs about cigarettes; and
- Reduce brand appeal particularly among youth and young adults.

Minister Reilly concluded “plain packaging is one of a number of measures that are required to effectively denormalise smoking in our society. As such this initiative should not be looked at in isolation. Education and awareness, cessation services and extending the smoking ban to other areas are just some of the other measures which I am currently progressing.”

NOTES FOR EDITOR:

An informative video by Cancer Research UK on the power that cigarette packaging has on children is available online at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_z-4S8iicc

You can also find this video by googling “the answer is plain”

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