

Press release
Tuesday, May 27th

Generic packaging will mean fewer child smokers, say leading health charities

- *End of branded cigarette packets welcomed* -

The Irish Cancer Society and the Irish Heart Foundation have welcomed today's Government announcement that Ireland will become one of the first countries in the world to ban branding from cigarette packaging.

The charities claim that children will be less likely to start smoking because of the new legislation and has urged that the Government to ensure that its introduction is not delayed.

"In Ireland, children start smoking at a younger age than in any other European country because the tobacco industry has been so successful in marketing cigarettes here," said Kathleen O'Meara, Head of Advocacy and Communications at the Irish Cancer Society.

"But recent health legislation, such as the ban on cigarette displays in shops and on cigarette advertising, has restricted the ways in which the tobacco industry can attract new smokers. Now, one of the only ways left to recruit new, young smokers is through attractive packet design and that is why this legislation is so urgently needed", she said.

Chris Macey, Head of Advocacy at the Irish Heart Foundation said, "To maintain its profit levels, the tobacco industry has to replace the smokers it kills – almost always with teenagers who they target through massive investment in attractive cigarette packs.

"Plain packaging is proving to be a powerful weapon in making smoking less appealing and health warnings more effective. The faster it is introduced, the more lives will ultimately be saved and the Minister's strong stance on this issue should be applauded by every parent in Ireland."

Research from the UK has found that both adults and adolescents perceive cigarettes in plain packs to be less appealing, less palatable, less satisfying and of lower quality compared to cigarettes in current packaging.

Children believe a cigarette packet's colour, text design and box shape communicate characteristics and social status of the people who smoke a particular brand. Some of these children then go on to become lifetime smokers. The new cigarette packs will be an unattractive olive or dark brown colour, be covered by a health warning that makes up 75% of the pack and use a standard text font and size.

"We know from the Australian experience that the tobacco industry will fight this legislation at every stage. But the reality is that the industry will be beaten and the Irish people will be better protected from a product that kills one in two smokers. We hope that the Minister will start drafting the legislation immediately and we stand beside him every step of the way from now until the legislation comes into force," said Ms. O'Meara.

The Irish Cancer Society and the Irish Heart Foundation say that current packaging glamorises smoking and that tobacco products packaged in a standard colour, typeface and box will improve the effectiveness of health warnings, reduce misconceptions about relative harmfulness of various brands and reduce the overall appeal of smoking.

ENDS.

Note to Editors:

One of the lawyers who was critical in winning the legal case on generic packaging for the Australian Government, will be in Ireland tomorrow (Wednesday) and Thursday to speak at the European Week Against Cancer.

If you would like to arrange an interview with Jonathan Liberman, please contact either Rachel Foley or Orla Shiels below.

One of the most compelling cases for generic packaging is a Cancer Research UK video which shows children's relationship with cigarette packs:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_z-4S8iicc

We also have images from the Australian Government of what generic packaging looks like. Please contact us for copies of these.

'Generic' packaging is also known as 'plain' or 'standard' packaging. These terms are interchangeable.

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