
Plain packaging a key to reducing tobacco toll

Fielding commended for leadership on tobacco control

Family First Senator Steve Fielding should be commended for tabling a Senate bill to amend the Trade Practices Act and mandate the introduction of plain packaging of cigarette products, Cancer Council Australia said today.

Chair of Cancer Council Australia's Tobacco Issues Committee, Kylie Lindorff, and the National Heart Foundation's tobacco control spokesperson, Maurice Swanson, said plain packaging of tobacco products would help to de-normalise smoking, which was critical to reducing the cancer and cardiovascular death and disease burden it causes.

Plain packaging would also reflect the harmful and dangerous reality of what is inside the package and enable mandatory graphic warnings on cigarette packaging to stand out and be more effective.

Ms Lindorff and Mr Swanson said the glossy packs, bright colours, logos and other corporate branding on tobacco products belied the fact that smoking caused more than 15,000 deaths in Australia each year, most from cancer or cardiovascular disease.

"It is incongruous enough that a poorly regulated product that is available from retailers almost anywhere kills more than half of its consumers," Ms Lindorff said.

"For the products to also be marketed in glossy packets intended to convey the aspirations or sense of identity of the consumer is even more absurd."

Mr Swanson said the reality was that tobacco products represented premature death in more than half of those who purchase them and chronic disease in almost everyone who smokes long-term.

"Generic plain packaging, with a clear graphic warning on the front and back of the pack, should be mandated to counter the allure of smoking and reduce the disease burden it causes," he said.

Ms Lindorff and Mr Swanson said Senator Fielding's commitment to tobacco control should be supported and that government should introduce plain packaging as part of its shift in health policy towards improved disease prevention.

MEDIA CONTACTS: Cancer Council Australia

Glen Turner, 0412 443 212 glen.turner@cancer.org.au

Paul Grogan, 0409 456 727 paul.grogan@cancer.org.au

National Heart Foundation

Siobhan O'Neill, 0423 827 697 Siobhan.O'Neill@heartfoundation.org.au