

# Standardised packaging of tobacco products will protect children from a deadly addiction and save lives

“Having reviewed the evidence it is in my view highly likely that standardised packaging would serve to reduce the rate of children taking up smoking and implausible that it would increase the consumption of tobacco”. Sir Cyril Chantler (March 2014).<sup>1</sup>

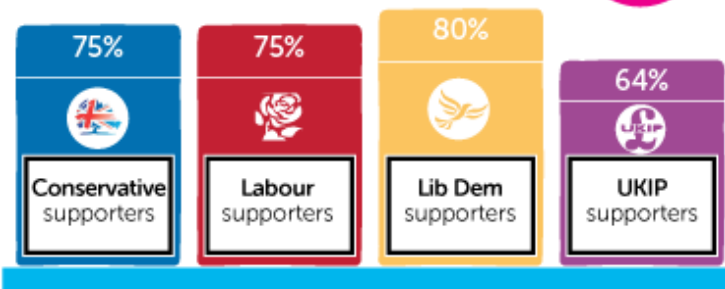
- Two-thirds of smokers start before they are 18<sup>2</sup> – the beginning of an addiction that kills half of all long-term smokers.<sup>3</sup>
- Tobacco use is the UK’s single greatest cause of preventable illness and avoidable death, with 100,000 people dying each year from smoking-related diseases, including cancer.<sup>4</sup>
- 72% of UK adults support standardised packaging, with only 15% opposed (YouGov, January 2015).<sup>5</sup>

Standardised packaging has the backing of the Smokefree Action Coalition – over 250 health and wellbeing organisations including the Royal Medical Colleges and the British Medical Association. The measure has the full support of the Chief Medical Officer<sup>6</sup> and the World Health Organization.<sup>7</sup>



**VOTERS OF ALL POLITICAL COLOURS  
SUPPORT STANDARDISED PACKAGING  
FOR CIGARETTES**

**72%  
ACROSS  
PARTIES**



YouGov poll, support for plain packs by voting intention, January 2015



Data on Green supporters wasn't analysed, but the measure has been backed by the Green Party



Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are poised to follow a positive decision from the UK Government, while the Republic of Ireland is set to become the first country in Europe to introduce the measure.<sup>8</sup> Other countries such as France<sup>9</sup>, New Zealand<sup>10</sup>, Finland<sup>11</sup> and South Africa<sup>12</sup> are also at various stages of progress with the policy.

The Department of Health commissioned a systematic review<sup>13</sup> in 2011, of all the available evidence on the impact of standardised packaging (this was updated in 2013 forming the Stirling Review<sup>14</sup>). This evidence consistently demonstrated that standard packs would reduce the appeal of tobacco products.

“The Stirling Review constitutes the most extensive and authoritative piece of work on the issue of standardised packaging yet undertaken”.  
Report of the Independent Review into standardised packaging of tobacco products, authored by Sir Cyril Chantler (March 2014)<sup>15</sup>.

## Standardised packaging: the evidence is clear

Australia introduced standardised packaging in December 2012 as part of their comprehensive approach to tobacco control and the results are encouraging:

- Between 2010 and 2013 - the period in which standard packs were introduced - Australia saw a **15 per cent reduction in smoking prevalence**. Data also confirms that fewer young people are taking up the habit<sup>16,17</sup>.
- Figures from the Australian Department of Health show that **tobacco consumption in the first quarter of 2014 was the lowest ever recorded**.<sup>18</sup>
- Official Australian Treasury figures reveal a significant **5% drop in cigarettes sold per head of population** in the first year since standard packs have been introduced.<sup>19</sup>

The tobacco industry argues that standardised packaging would infringe on its intellectual property rights<sup>20</sup>, a dispute which has already been tested in Australia where the High Court dismissed their claim.<sup>21</sup> International trade agreements declare that they should not be interpreted in a way which prevents implementation of public health measures.<sup>22</sup>

### The illicit tobacco trade

Tobacco industry-funded reports claim that the illicit trade has risen since the introduction of standardised packaging in Australia. However, Australian officials have described the methodology of this assessment as "flawed".<sup>23</sup>

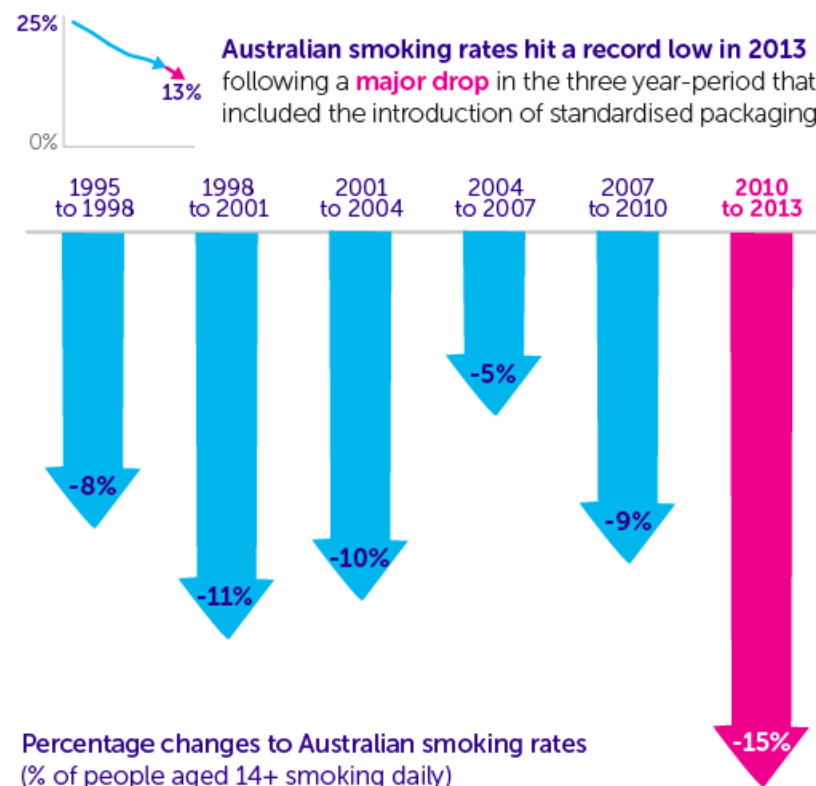
In the UK official figures from HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) show that the illicit cigarette market has more than halved (to 10%) since peaking in 2000/01.<sup>24,25</sup>

A report from HMRC concludes, "We have seen no evidence to suggest the introduction of standardised packaging will have a significant impact on the overall size of the illicit market or prompt a step-change in the activity of organised crime groups".<sup>26</sup>

In its report on tobacco smuggling, the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee concluded, "We believe that the decision on standardised packaging should be driven by health reasons and the imperative need to reduce the numbers of young people who start smoking".<sup>27</sup>

For more information please email [publicaffairs@cancer.org.uk](mailto:publicaffairs@cancer.org.uk) and visit [cruk.org/tobacco](http://cruk.org/tobacco) for references

## Success of tobacco control in Australia



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