NSW supports plain packs as more young smokers stub out

Support for plain packaging continues to grow across NSW, with three quarters of the state, and half of all smokers now in favour of the regulation, a new survey reveals.

The preliminary findings, released on the eve of World No Tobacco Day, are part of the draft NSW Smoking and Health Survey 2015. It also shows plain packaging is having a profound impact on young smokers aged 18-39, with half reporting a positive change in their smoking behaviour, including thinking about quitting, smoking less or trying to quit as a result of the policy.

Chief Cancer Officer and CEO of the Cancer Institute NSW, Professor David Currow, highlighted the importance of these findings at a time when plain packaging is front of mind globally.

“This World No Tobacco Day we are celebrating that the UK and France are following Australia’s lead and introducing plain packaging legislation for tobacco, with Ireland and Hungary following close behind.

“These preliminary findings are the latest in a growing body of evidence that supports the effectiveness of plain packaging as a policy measure.”

Professor Currow explains the significance of the impact, “This survey indicates that smokers, especially young smokers, are not only thinking differently about their smoking behaviour, but are taking action. We see evidence of this with the youth smoking rate at an all time low of 6.7 per cent. When you consider the serious health consequences of smoking – as a cause of many cancers and chronic diseases – the benefits will be felt right across the community for generations to come.”

The survey also highlights the change in the impact of plain packaging since 2013, when the policy was in its first year of implementation.

The number of people who reported a quit attempt because of plain packaging has increased five fold (3%-15%) and the number of people who said they smoked less as a result of the policy has doubled (9%-18%). There has also been a 54 per cent increase in people who thought about quitting due to plain packaging (13%-20%).

“Smoking rates in NSW and across Australia are at a record low, thanks to a comprehensive approach to tobacco control. This survey highlights the important part that plain packaging has to play as part of this mix,” says Professor Currow.

Support for people wishing to quit smoking is available at iCanQuit.com.au or by calling the Quitline on 13 78 48 (13 QUIT).

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The Cancer Institute NSW is Australia’s first statewide government cancer control agency. Established under the Cancer Institute (NSW) Act 2003, the Institute is responsible for lessening the impact of cancer by reducing cancer incidence, increasing cancer survival, improving quality of life for people living with cancer, and providing expert advice on cancer.

www.cancerinstitute.org.au