

Teenagers Proving Plain Packaging on Cigarettes is Working

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A study shows brand-free packaging and warning labels is having an effect on young opinions.

PLAIN packaging on cigarettes has made smoking less appealing to teenagers and prompted more people to consider quitting, research reveals.

An analysis of the first year of Australia's world-leading tobacco reform also suggests fears the laws would spark a rise in black-market cigarettes have been "exaggerated".

A series of studies published in the British Medical Journal indicates the laws forcing tobacco companies in 2012 to make their packets dark brown with enlarged graphic images have been successful.

Cancer Council Victoria research asked more than 5000 students aged 12-17 to rate four popular cigarette brands before and after the changes.

Associate Professor Victoria White, from the Cancer Council Victoria, said teenagers rated the brands more negatively in 2013 compared with 2011.

Although the drop in appeal was modest, it is seen as a sign plain packs and large graphic warnings disrupt the positive image associated with branded packs.

People displaying their cigarette packets and smoking in cafes, restaurants and bars also appeared to decline one year after the changes.

The Cancer Council's Professor Melanie Wakefield said smokers may have chosen to light up less often so they weren't judged by passers-by.

Smokers were more likely to conceal their packs from view, stub out cigarettes prematurely, attempt to quit or think about giving up.

Professor Wakefield said the number of people considering quitting over the course of a month went up from 20 per cent to 27 per cent.

The number of people admitting to buying illegal tobacco, or "chop chop", stayed at 3 per cent. Cancer Council CEO Todd Harper said this finding "blew the lid on tobacco industry scare tactics".

There was also no evidence of fears people would switch from convenience stores to supermarkets to buy cigarettes.

Quit Victoria director Sarah White said: "Plain packaging is the newest weapon in our arsenal to fight Big Tobacco."

There is now a push for the Government to introduce bans on smoking in outdoor dining areas and to boost anti-smoking advertisements.

Ireland and Britain have committed to impose plain-packaging laws.

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