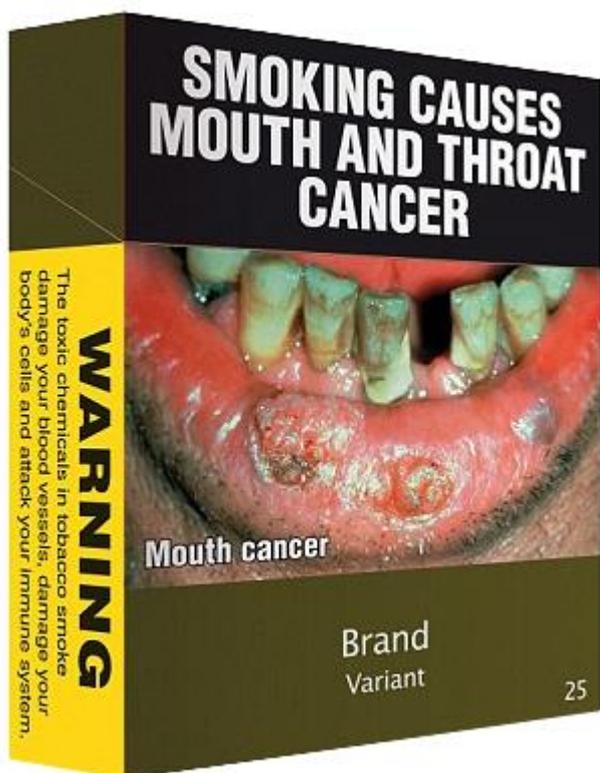


## Victory for children's health as Lords approve Bill amendment to enable plain standardised tobacco packaging

29 January 2014



Health campaigners have expressed delight at the news that the House of Lords has given overwhelming support to a Government amendment to the Children and Families Bill that will pave the way for standardised tobacco packaging in the UK. [1] This means that the UK is almost certain to be one of the first countries in the world to ban the glitzy promotional features on cigarette packs. Australia introduced standardised packaging in December 2012, and the Government of the Republic of Ireland has said that it will do so this year.

Standardised packaging of cigarettes and other tobacco products is intended to make starting to smoke less attractive to children and young people. Among existing adult smokers, two thirds report that they began to smoke before the age of 18, and almost two fifths before the age of 16. [2] Standard packs will have no tobacco branding apart from the name of the product in a simple typeface, and will be covered in written and graphic health warnings and advice on quitting (see picture of Australian standard packs on the left: please note that standard packs are NOT plain white packs).

The UK Government announced in July 2013 that it would not proceed with legislation on standardised packaging. But after a

cross Party and crossbench alliance in the Lords tabled an amendment to the Children and Families Bill, the Government announced in November 2013 that it would bring in its own amendment to the Bill.

Members of the Smokefree Action Coalition - an alliance of more than 250 organisations committed to promoting public health - want the Government to bring forward Regulations to bring in standardised packaging as soon as possible. [3] The eminent pediatrician Sir Cyril Chantler has been asked by the Government to conduct a review of the public health evidence on the policy, to report by March 2014.

Deborah Arnott, Chief Executive of Action on Smoking and Health, said:

“This is a great win for tobacco control and public health. We congratulate parliamentarians from all Parties and the crossbenches in the House of Lords and all those supporters, who worked so hard to make standardised tobacco packaging a reality. Everyone who cares about protecting the health of children and about reducing the toll of death and disease caused by smoking should welcome the outcome of today’s vote. We are absolutely delighted.”

Baroness Hollins, Chair of the Board of Science at the British Medical Association said:

"The BMA has long campaigned for the Government to introduce standardised packaging as a way of helping smokers to quit and to help persuade non-smokers, especially children who are heavily influenced by tobacco marketing, never to start this addictive and lethal habit in the first place. As doctors we see first-hand every day the devastating effects of smoking - the unnecessary loss of life, illness and misery it causes. We call on the Government to bring in Regulations on standard packs as soon as possible.

Dr Hilary Cass, President of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health said:

“Today’s result is a victory for child health – and for the overall health of the nation. Government has recognised its duty to protect children’s health and is sending a strong message to the tobacco industry; it is wrong to market cigarettes to impressionable young people.

“An estimated 200,000 young people start smoking every year, resulting in a range of preventable conditions including chest infections, asthma and even lung cancer. If today’s move goes some way to reducing those figures, the benefits will be felt by generations to come.”

**ENDS**

**NOTES**

[1] Children and Families Bill. House of Lords Report Stage Amendment 57B.

[2] Young People and Smoking ASH Fact Sheet, Jan. 2014

[3] The Smokefree Action Coalition is an alliance of over 250 organisations including the medical royal colleges, the BMA, children’s organisations like the National Children’s Bureau, the Faculty of Public Health, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, the Trading Standards Institute and major health charities such as Cancer Research UK and the British Heart Foundation: all support standardised packaging.