

Plain packets will remove the appeal of smoking for young women, says UWS researcher

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(Medical Xpress) -- As the world's first tobacco plain packaging legislation is passed through Parliament today, a researcher from the University of Western Sydney says removing the brands from cigarettes is an important step towards deglamorising smoking for young women.

Dr Emilee Gilbert from the School of Psychology at UWS has completed a qualitative study of young women's perceptions and attitudes toward smoking.

The findings clearly indicated that the visual appearance and brands of [cigarette packets](#) have a strong influence on people's decisions to take up and continue smoking.

"As smokers often carry their packs with them and keep them on public display, the packaging of the cigarette has become an important vehicle for establishing connections between the brand and the consumer," says Dr Gilbert.

"By taking away the brand of a cigarette packet, you take away this important front line of advertising. We are also stripping the cigarette companies of their ability to lure and establish personal connections between a brand and a consumer."

Dr Gilbert says a prime example of the influence that cigarette brands

have on people can be evidenced through the views of [young women](#) smokers.

"Since the 1930s, [cigarettes](#) have been packaged in slim, long, light coloured packs to appeal specifically to young women - and the strategy has worked," she says.

"The visual appearance of the cigarette packet is still very important today, with an overwhelming majority of young women consistently choosing cigarettes that are sold in light coloured packages, preferably with a combination of white and gold.

Since the direct advertising of cigarettes has been illegal in Australia, Dr Gilbert says the tobacco industry has become more covert, indirect and subtle in their marketing campaigns - but their efforts have still been successful in attracting young women.

"Despite the proliferation of [health messages](#), many young women in Australia today still consider smoking as a way of looking cool, and attaining a status that is socially valued," says Dr Gilbert.

"It is not the cigarette itself that is initially enticing; it is the image of the cigarette as the ultimate, attainable fashion accessory. If you take away the look and style of the cigarettes, you will take away the appeal for many young women."

Dr Gilbert says it is important for Australians to stand up against tobacco companies and support the change.

"It is no wonder the [tobacco industry](#) is so strongly opposed to the plain packaging legislation, because they are incredibly aware of the influence that brands have on people," she says.

Provided by University of Western Sydney

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