

N. Zealand to introduce plain packets for tobacco

February 19 2013

New Zealand announced plans Tuesday to force tobacco companies to sell cigarettes in plain packaging, becoming only the second country in the world after Australia to introduce the measure.

Associate Health Minister Tariana Turia said banning [tobacco](#) branding and selling cigarettes in drab boxes plastered with explicit health warnings "will remove the last remaining vestige of glamour from these deadly products".

"Currently the packaging does everything it can to attract consumers and increase the perceived appeal and acceptability of smoking," she told reporters.

"The move to plain packaging would make more explicit what tobacco is—a product that kills 5,000 New Zealanders a year."

The move was widely anticipated after New Zealand gave support in principle to plain packaging last year and praised Australia's pioneering efforts.

The packaging was introduced in Australia in December, meaning all [cigarettes](#) must be sold in identical, olive-brown boxes bearing the same typeface and large health warnings bearing graphic images of diseased [smokers](#).

Turia said the government would introduce legislation later this year but

delay enforcing it until legal challenges launched by tobacco firms against Australia's ban had been decided.

She said it was almost inevitable that [cigarette manufacturers](#) would also take legal action in New Zealand but the government was determined to press on with the change.

"We know we've got trade obligations but we are confident plain packaging can be introduced with those," she said.

"I know that when we look back we will know we had made the right decision today."

The Cancer Society of New Zealand said it was "over the moon" at the government's decision, while Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) said it would prevent tobacco firms using marketing to hook customers.

"The lives of New Zealanders are being put above the interests of the tobacco giants," [ASH](#) director Ben Youdan said, adding that he would have preferred for the ban to be introduced immediately.

British American Tobacco's New Zealand general manager Steve Rush said his company remained opposed to plain packaging, arguing they breach international trade rules and intellectual property rights.

"While we can't rule out legal action at this stage, we can say that we will fully participate in the legislative process," he said in a statement.

Rush said last year that there was no proof plain packaging reduced smoking and it set a dangerous precedent that could eventually spread to other products such as alcohol.

Australian Health Minister Tanya Plibersek welcomed New Zealand's

announcement and said she hoped other counties would follow suit.

"I am absolutely delighted the New Zealand government joined Australia in putting the health and welfare of its citizens ahead of profits for Big Tobacco," she said.

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