

Study shows more "quit" stimulus needed on cigarette packs

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New research from the University of Otago, published recently in the prestigious BMJ-owned journal *Tobacco Control*, suggests tobacco plain packaging would be enhanced by clearer and more visually striking Quitline information.

Professor Janet Hoek, from the [ASPIRE2025](#) collaboration, says implementing plain packaging should be a priority action to achieve the Government's Smokefree 2025 goal.

"Evidence from Australia shows plain packaging is working exactly as researchers predicted; we are seeing declines in both [tobacco consumption](#) and smoking prevalence," says Professor Hoek.

"Unfortunately, New Zealand is lagging behind Australia; the Government should act quickly to pass and implement the plain packaging bill currently sitting on the legislative agenda. We should also look to see how we can improve on Australia's example."

Professor Hoek's team explored this latter question by conducting an online study of 608 New Zealand smokers and using a choice experiment to examine responses to eight different [information](#) formats relative to the status quo. They also tested perceptions of alternative information formats, and compared the visual impact of different designs.

The results show a two panel format that highlighted Quitline contact

information and a brief affirming message was consistently rated as most effective. All the novel formats tested were rated as more effective than the current method of displaying the Quitline information.

Professor Hoek says Australian data show calls to their Quitline increased by 75% following the introduction of plain packaging.

"The Government has set a goal that New Zealand will become essentially smokefree by 2025; plain packaging is clearly a crucial measure needed to achieve that goal.

"Our findings show we could maximise the impact of plain packaging by ensuring plainly packaged tobacco products display Quitline information more effectively.

"We know that smokers who use cessation support are more likely to [quit](#) than those who make cold turkey quit attempts. It makes sense that [tobacco](#) packages, which smokers see each time they smoke, do two things. First, they should provide a strong stimulus to quit - [plain packaging](#), with its dissuasive colours and large, unappealing pictorial warnings, performs this role. Second, it should assist the many smokers who want to quit by communicating information that will support cessation, for example, by ensuring the Quitline number is as prominent as possible.

"Rather than merely following Australia's lead, our findings show we can improve on what has already done. Plain packaging that prompts smokers to quit using cessation support, such as the Quitline, will increase the chances they become smokefree."

Provided by University of Otago

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