

Evidence Not On The Side Of Regulating Tobacco Packaging

Friday 4 April, 2014

Commenting on the government's statement on standardised packaging of tobacco products, Mark Littlewood, Director General at the Institute of Economic Affairs, said:

"The government should resist the urge to rush to regulate. The early evidence from Australia, where plain packs have been introduced, suggests this policy has not had any impact on youth smoking rates - in fact, overall smoking appears to have risen.

"The government also needs to consider the wider possible consequences of this policy. The Home Secretary should be asked to provide an opinion on the likely impact on smuggling and the illicit trade in tobacco. The Treasury should be asked to calculate the potential impact on tax revenues and legal advice should be sought over whether there is any risk of the British taxpayer footing a multi-billion pound compensation bill under international trade or intellectual property laws.

"Once such advice is taken, it may well indicate that this is a hugely expensive way to fail to tackle smoking rates amongst youngsters, with a negligible or even negative impact on health."

- Ends -

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Notes to Editors:

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