Surgeons say plain packaging is a step in the right direction

Tuesday 31 May, 2016

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) is very pleased with the New Zealand Government’s announcement today to progress with plain packaging legislation.

Dr Sally Langley, a RACS councillor and Christchurch plastic surgeon, welcomed the move, stating that it represented a positive step forward for the health of New Zealanders.

“Tobacco is one of the largest public health issues facing New Zealand today,” Dr Langley said. “Although great progress has already been made towards reducing tobacco use, smoking still kills an average of 5,000 New Zealanders every year. That figure is quite simply unacceptable.

“From a surgical perspective alone, there are serious implications for patients who smoke.

“The risk of complications during and after surgery is higher, infection is more likely, and recovery times are longer.

“Smokers are also 30 percent more likely to die within 30 days of an operation. The consequences of smoking just cannot be ignored...,” Dr Langley said.

Despite strong opposition from the tobacco industry, plain packaging measures were adopted by Australia in late 2012 and have been hailed as a success.

Since then, countries such as Ireland, France, and the United Kingdom have legislated for similar initiatives.

“RACS, along with many other public health groups, has been calling for plain packaging in New Zealand for some time.

“We are very pleased that the New Zealand government is showing leadership by progressing with this important public health measure.”

“The vision for a Smokefree Aotearoa by 2025 is world leading, but there is still a lot of work that needs to be done,” Dr Langley said.

“With the introduction of plain packaging, I am hopeful that New Zealand can get back on track to meet this admirable target that will ultimately save many lives.”

About the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)

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MEDIA RELEASE

RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

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