



NEWSAGENTS DEMAND COMPULSORY ID CARD TO TACKLE UNDERAGE TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL SALES.

27th March 2008

THE Chief Executive of the Convenience Stores and Newsagents Association (CSNA) admitted today (Thursday) that he is disappointed with new research figures on the sale of tobacco to minors.

A report released by Health Minister Mary Harney shows that 48 per cent of shops and 64 per cent of licensed premises retailed tobacco products to people under 18 in a sample survey.

"Our members who sold tobacco to minors in this instance must take responsibility. We are committed to eradicating the sale of tobacco to under-18s and the failure rate in this instance is, obviously, unacceptably high," said Vincent Jennings of the CSNA.

"We have instituted comprehensive training programmes for staff in our stores and we are working with the Department of Health and the law enforcement authorities to completely stamp out under-age sale of tobacco."

Mr Jennings insisted, however, that government and society in general has to play a more proactive role in controlling the access of minors to age-restricted products.

"What we urgently require is for the government to make the Garda Age Card mandatory for everyone in Ireland between the ages of 18 and 23," said the CSNA Chief Executive.

"Retailers of age-restricted products need to have the security of knowing that anyone they suspect of being potentially under-age is legally required to carry an Age Card. If they don't produce that card then they will not be served.

"We are one of a tiny minority of countries in the European Union that doesn't have an identity card culture that confirms age. In the Netherlands, an identification card is compulsory at the age of 14, in Portugal it is compulsory at the age of 10, in Poland it is compulsory at the age of 18, in Germany at 16, in Hungary at 14, in Belgium at 15, in Greece at the age of 12, Spain at the age of 14 and in Slovenia at the age of 18.

"The government has made good progress in recent years with regards to youth smoking with a survey released by the Office of Tobacco Control earlier this month showing that smoking amongst 10-17 year olds has plummeted by a quarter over the last decade.

"The Office of Tobacco Control's survey released today proves the effectiveness of requiring identification and in excess of nine out of ten teenagers who were required to produce ID in the survey were refused the sale.

"Making the national age card compulsory for 18 year-olds, abolishing the €10 levy and shortening the six to eight week wait for the identification is the best way of continuing this progress."

Mr Jennings noted that the performance of convenience stores and newsagents in the survey was far superior to that of licensed premises.

"It is especially worrying that places where 95 per cent of all products retailed should be age-restricted were the most likely to sell tobacco to under-age buyers," he said.

"If they're not asking for identification for the sale of cigarettes then it is likely that they are not asking for identification for the sale of alcohol. Approximately 95 per cent of the products our members retail are not age-controlled and yet we still outperformed the locations where 95 per cent of the products should be age-controlled."

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Note to editors:

The Convenience Stores & Newsagents Association (CSNA), formerly the Irish Retail Newsagents Association (IRNA), is the largest independent grouping of retail newsagents and convenience stores in Ireland.

With over 1,500 members and 23 branches, the body represents some of the most well know names in Irish retailing.

The CSNA monitors all legislative and administrative matters affecting the small retailer and makes regular proposals to government bodies on the issues of underage alcohol and cigarette consumption. The CSNA has consistently supported the introduction of more stringent identification to help curb the sale of age restricted products.