

11 February, 2015

Local businesses caught selling illegal cigarettes

Tobacco retailers in South Eastern Sydney are being warned that if they sell illegal cigarettes they are breaking the law and can expect to face hefty fines.

The warning comes after two retailers in Haymarket were handed fines of several thousand dollars for selling cigarettes in packets without the approved health warnings.

Mr Ken Cheung, owner of the King of the Pack Tobacconist, was fined \$3300 for selling a packet of Dunhill Internationals without a health warning.

Mr De Rong Jing, an employee of the Chinatown Smoke Shop, who sold a packet of Double Happiness and a packet of Parliament Lights both without a health warning, was fined \$1650 for each offence.

The two tobacconists were prosecuted following an investigation by South Eastern Sydney Public Health Unit.

The fines were handed down at Downing Centre Court on 19 January. The magistrate noted the seriousness of the offences and said the fines should act as a deterrent and send a strong message to all tobacco retailers.

Under the Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2008, it is a criminal offence to sell cigarettes unless the packet in which they are sold is marked with a health warning. The maximum fine for this offence is \$11,000 for an individual and \$55,000 in the case of a corporation.

Professor Mark Ferson, Director of the South Eastern Sydney Public Health Unit, said: "Despite long efforts to educate and remind retailers of the penalties they could face if caught selling illegal cigarettes, it is worrying that people are still able to buy these products from some shops.

"The harmful effects of tobacco are proven. The government introduced public policies including plain packaging and health warnings in an attempt to minimise that harm.

"Everybody selling tobacco should know their responsibilities under the law. There really should be no excuse. These laws have been in place for a long time. Retailers might think it is good for business but it is not good for the health of our community.

"These fines should make retailers think twice before selling illicit cigarettes."

Members of the community can help reduce the harm caused by smoking cigarettes by reporting possible breaches of the law to the Public Health Unit on 02 9382 8333 or to the Tobacco Information Line on 1800 357 412. All complaints will be dealt with confidentially.

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