



RGDATA meets with Department of Health on Public Health (Alcohol) Bill

RGDATA Director General Tara Buckley and RGDATA Board members, Annie Timothy, Eamon Gavin, Louis Byrne and Sean Quish met with senior officials in the Department of Health and Children this week to express independent retailers' concerns with some aspects of the provisions of the proposed new law.

The RGDATA delegation told the Department of Health and Children that independent retailers of alcohol are responsible community based retailers who have a huge commitment to ensure that alcohol is sold responsibly.

RGDATA also stressed that the main problems concerning the sale of alcohol had not arisen from local community based retailers, but from large multinational chains who were aggressively selling alcohol below cost and investing huge sums in marketing and advertising promotions to increase alcohol sales. RGDATA had highlighted the risk of this happening when the ban on below cost selling was removed.

The delegation stressed that it was important that the Department introduced measures which targeted those who have been irresponsibly selling alcohol and do not penalise the responsible community based retailers who are very clear on their obligations and responsibilities when selling alcohol.

RGDATA also made it clear that the organisation was solely representing the interests of the independent retail grocery sector and is not carrying the flag for the larger drinks companies who have a broader range of objections to the new measures.

The RGDATA members raised concerns about the impact of structural separation on independent retailers and were provided with clarification on the nature of the measures proposed by the Department. They were also assured that any new measures on structural separation will be a matter for the next Government to determine and if contained in the law when passed, will not come into force for at least an additional year.

The delegation also stressed the importance of ensuring that the new law creates a level playing field and does not confer a competitive advantage on some retailers of alcohol over others. The Department needed to recognise that retail formats are evolving and any new law needs to take account of this.

Given the dissolution of the Dail for the General Election, the Bill will be reconsidered by a new Government. RGDATA will engage with the next Minister for Health and Children to ensure that members interests are recognised in any new Bill.

Shop owners have an opportunity over the next few weeks to make their concerns known to their local candidates and to seek their support for fair and balanced treatment of independent shops with regard to sale of alcohol legislation and all other legislation.

Tuesday 2 February, 2016