



## POSITION STATEMENT

### TOBACCO

Smoking is New Zealand's leading preventable cause of death, causing 25% of all cancer deaths<sup>1</sup>. Exposure to second-hand smoke causes around 350 deaths in New Zealand per year<sup>2</sup>. The Cancer Society of New Zealand aims to:

- support efforts to reduce harm caused by tobacco use in New Zealand
- support efforts to reduce the disproportionately high prevalence of Maori smoking to non-Maori smoking.

Tobacco is a highly addictive drug. In 2001, 25% of males and 25% of females aged 15 years and over smoked regularly<sup>3</sup>.

Adult smokers are at increased risk of nearly 40 different diseases including cardiovascular diseases, a number of cancers, and adverse outcomes such as diabetes. An estimated 4500 New Zealanders die prematurely each year as a consequence of smoking tobacco<sup>4</sup>. Nearly half of these deaths occur in middle age (35-69 years). Tobacco has a particularly adverse impact on Māori health with an estimated 31% of Māori deaths being attributable to tobacco smoking<sup>5</sup>. An estimated 14-15 percent more Māori would survive middle age if no Māori smoked after age 35 years.

In addition, exposure to second-hand smoke kills around 350 New Zealanders each year<sup>6</sup>. Second-hand smoke has been shown to cause heart disease, lung cancer, acute stroke, nasal sinus cancer, foetal growth change, and has been associated with infertility, impotence, asthma attacks, spontaneous

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<sup>1</sup> *Tobacco Statistics 2000*: Cancer Society of New Zealand.

<sup>2</sup> Woodward A, Laugesen M. How many deaths are caused by second hand cigarette smoke? *Tobacco Control* 2001; 10: 383-388.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Health. *Tobacco Facts 2002* Public Health Intelligence, Occasional Report No 2. Wellington 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Peto D, Lopez J, Boreham J et al. *Mortality from Smoking in Developed Countries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

<sup>5</sup> Laugesen M, Clements M. *Cigarette Smoking Mortality Among Māori*. Wellington: Ministry of Māori Development, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Woodward A, Laugesen M. How many deaths are caused by second hand cigarette smoke? *Tobacco Control* 2001; 10: 383-388.

abortion, and cervical cancer<sup>7</sup>. When the foetus is exposed to tobacco smoke there is an increased risk of fetal and perinatal death. Exposure to tobacco smoke is also a major factor in the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). New Zealand data suggests that at least 50% of SIDS deaths are attributable to smoking<sup>8</sup>, that is, at least 60 a year.

The cost of smoking in New Zealand is substantial. The cost from tobacco use to New Zealand's publicly funded personal health care services in 1987 was estimated at \$202 million in 1992 dollars. Not counted are the costs of exposure to second-hand smoke, or the costs of cigar and pipe smoking. The wider estimated costs to society far exceed the direct health care costs to Government and has been estimated at \$1.9 billion in 1992 dollars<sup>9</sup>.

The Cancer Society seeks to implement its policy for tobacco control through a health promotion programme which includes:

- Working in alliances with other agencies involved in tobacco control nationally and at a regional level
- Supporting government prevention initiatives and the smokefree schools programme
- Supporting the regular monitoring of fourth form smoking rates
- Supporting by Māori for Māori tobacco control programmes
- Advocating that all educational institutions be totally smokefree
- Advocating for regular increases in taxation and increased Government funding for tobacco control
- Advocating for and supporting programmes to encourage smokers to quit smoking
- Advocating for progressive strengthening of the 1990 Smoke-free Environments Act, including support for completely smokefree restaurants, bars, clubs and casinos.

#### **Statements of Intent:**

- The National Office, all Divisions and centres and all activities of the Cancer Society will be completely smokefree.
- The Cancer Society will employ only non-smokers when new staff are being employed.
- The Cancer Society will not knowingly employ any outside agency that works in association with the Tobacco Industry.
- The Cancer Society will not accept sponsorship from a tobacco company.
- The Cancer Society will not invest in the tobacco industry.

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<sup>7</sup>ASH/Smokefree Coalition/ATAK. *What are the health effects of secondhand smoke?*. Factsheet #2, June 2001.

<sup>8</sup> Mitchell EA, Tuohy PG, Brunt JM et al. Risk factors for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome following the prevention campaign in New Zealand: A prospective study. *Paediatrics* 1997; 100: 835-40.

<sup>9</sup> Public Health Commission. *Tobacco Products: The Public Health Commission's Advice to the Minister of Health 1993-1994*. Wellington 1994.

- The Cancer Society will maintain its position as a leading tobacco control advocate, and continue to support the development and implementation of New Zealand's tobacco control strategy.
- The Cancer Society will use the media and speak out on tobacco issues.

This policy is written in conjunction with the Cancer Society's National Health Promotion Strategic Plan, 2002.

Reviewed December 2002