



Media Release

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Tobacco Retail Displays Breakfast Seminar

Research highlights influence of tobacco displays

Researchers from the University of Otago and Massey University today released a report linking tobacco retail displays with tobacco purchasing behaviour.

The report, commissioned by the Cancer Society of New Zealand and Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), examined evidence documenting the effects of retail tobacco displays.

Associate Professor Richard Edwards, and Senior Research Fellow George Thomson from the Department of Public Health, University of Otago, Wellington researched the views and arguments of retailers in New Zealand and in similar countries. Janet Hoek, Professor in marketing at Massey University, researched the views of smokers and former smokers. The work aimed to provide insights into the influence of tobacco displays, the 'powerwall' of cigarettes behind retail counters.

The report led by Professor Hoek, *Effects of tobacco retail displays on ex-smokers and lapsed quitters, reveals that* retail displays may undermine quit attempts amongst smokers and tempt former smokers.

The interviewees were evenly split between those who were quitting, and are currently smokefree, and those who had since 'relapsed' after making a quit attempt. The group comprised half Maori smokers and half non-Maori, due to the higher Maori smoking rate (over 50% compared to the national average of 23.5%)

"The research shows that many participants were acutely aware of the existence of tobacco displays." said, Ben Youdan, Director of Action on Smoking and Health (ASH).

Belinda Hughes from the Cancer Society said, "There is real concern that retail tobacco displays do undermine quit attempts, participants expressed particular concern that the displays attract young people to develop a smoking addiction."

The Ministry of Health has recently called for submissions as part of a review of tobacco displays. Amongst the options being considered is an outright ban of the display of tobacco products in retail outlets.

Iceland, Thailand and parts of Canada have proceeded with banning tobacco displays. Ireland and Tasmania have also decided to bring in a similar ban.

Tobacco industry and resellers are concerned about the implications a ban could bring, fearing financial losses amongst retailers and disadvantages for small retailers.

However, a retail display ban in Saskatchewan, Canada achieved over 98% compliance and resulted in minimal economic costs to retailers, and no evidence of adverse effects on small retailers.

Notes to Editors

More than 8000 dairies, convenience stores, service stations and supermarkets in New Zealand sell tobacco products.

The displays are usually located immediately behind the sales counter, in full view of thousands of children, smokers and former smokers.

Health researchers, health professionals and others in many countries have raised concerns about these displays, which they believe undermine restrictions on tobacco promotion, and encourage children to start smoking.

There is international research evidence that retail product displays and other forms of retail marketing increase susceptibility to smoking and smoking uptake among children, and may encourage children to view smoking as a normal social behaviour.

40% of smokers who tried to quit experienced an urge to purchase cigarettes as a result of seeing tobacco product displays. 31% of smokers agreed that removing tobacco product displays in retail outlets would assist quitting. (Wakefield, M, 2007, *The effect of retail cigarette pack displays on impulse*)

Internationally, there is evidence of closer relationships at an international level between tobacco companies and large retailing organisations, such as supermarkets and oil companies.

The Ministry of Health has released a Consultation Document on the Future of Tobacco Displays in New Zealand; members of the public are invited to make submissions by 15 February – [www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/tobacco-displays-tell-us-what-you-think]

Further information or comment

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Retail tobacco displays Speaker Biographies

George Thomson

Senior Research Fellow, Department of Public Health, University of Otago, Wellington

Research interests - Tobacco control, health policy and health politics. His work includes researching government and business behaviour as determinants of population health.

Recent research has covered: Secondhand smoke in New Zealand homes and other smoking around children; The associates of and the behaviour of tobacco companies in New Zealand and; Tobacco retail displays.

He was an expert witness in the Janice Pou tobacco law suit case, and has published over 25 journal articles on tobacco control.

Richard Edwards

Associate Professor at the Department of Public Health, University of Otago, Wellington

He is a member of the Royal College of Physicians Tobacco Advisory group (Britain), and of the New Zealand Tobacco Control Research Steering group.

His research interests include: tobacco use epidemiology and control, secondhand smoke and smokefree policies and legislation, smoking and eye disease and environmental epidemiology.

Richard teaches epidemiology and is trained as a public health physician in the UK.

Janet Hoek

Professor in Marketing at Massey University

She is a member of the New Zealand Tobacco Control Research Steering group and a Principal Investigator in the Centre for Translational Research into Chronic Disease, based at the University of Otago.

Her research interests include: marketing regulation, particularly in relation to tobacco products, alcohol, and energy dense foods. She has also undertaken research into consumer deception and has been an expert witness in several intellectual property disputes. She has received several international awards for her research into marketing regulation.

She was an expert witness in the Janice Pou litigation taken against tobacco companies.