



Media release

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Cease and Desist: Health groups call on tobacco industry to quit

The Cancer Society of New Zealand and Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) are demanding that the Ministry of Health investigate an admission by the New Zealand Association of Convenience Stores (NZACS) that tobacco companies offer financial and other incentives to retailers to sell and display tobacco.

The Smokefree Environments Act bans any gift or cash rebate as an inducement or reward to any retailer for the purchase, sale, advertising or placement of tobacco products.

The revelation was made by the NZACS during a grilling they received from the Health Select Committee who are considering submissions on the proposal to ban tobacco displays in retail settings.

The NZACS also revealed that it represents tobacco interests - with several tobacco companies among its membership. One of which is sponsoring the Association's upcoming awards dinner in Auckland.

"The NZACS claimed that the tobacco displays issue is a commercial one which will affect retailers profits. No supporting evidence was provided to the committee that this would be the case. Clearly, tobacco companies are using the NZACS as a front in their efforts to continue to peddle tobacco and have it seen as a normal product that sits along side baked beans," said Dalton Kelly, CEO of the Cancer Society.

"It is time that regulators understand that this lobby group is just a front for the tobacco industry who are determined to keep people smoking. Over 600,000 New Zealanders smoke and each year 8,000 children under the age of 16 get addicted to tobacco. The NCACS are absolutely opposed to any measures that will empower people to quit smoking. The health of New Zealanders

should be more important than the profits of the tobacco industry,” said ASH Director, Ben Youdan.

The public has the right to know if tobacco companies are also funding the so-called ‘Stay displays campaign’ as has been reported.

The Health Select Committee has the statutory power to demand information on the nature of the kickbacks retailers are receiving from the tobacco industry.

Additionally, the Ministry of Health has the power to investigate if tobacco companies have breached the Smoke Free Environments Act. The Cancer Society and ASH insist that both the Ministry and the Health Select Committee investigate the full extent of the tobacco industry’s dirty tricks, and expose these so that future generations remain smokefree.

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