



Cancer Society New Zealand
Te Rōpū Mate Pukupuku o Aotearoa

National Office
Level 2, Red Cross House
69 Molesworth Street, Thorndon
PO Box 12700
Wellington

Telephone: 64 4 494-7270

Facsimile: 64 4 494-7271

Websites: www.cancernz.org.nz
www.daffodilday.org.nz

Email: admin@cancer.org.nz

MEDIA RELEASE

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Smokers demand the right to quit their controlling addiction

New data released today at the National Tobacco Control Conference shows that increasing numbers of New Zealand smokers support getting tobacco out of sight in shops.

"The idea that smokers love smoking is a myth. Smoking is a controlling addiction - the vast majority of smokers (90%) wish they'd never started to smokeⁱ and nearly half made a serious attempt to quit in the last yearⁱⁱ," said Belinda Keenan, Cancer Society Tobacco Control Advisor.

Nearly 6 in 10 smokers are now saying 'yes please' to a ban on tobacco retail marketing. Cancer Society commissioned survey data shows that the proportion of smokers supporting a ban on tobacco displays has increased considerably since they were first surveyed, with 59% of all smokers now supporting a ban on tobacco displays (up from 41% in October 2006).ⁱⁱⁱ

Smokers who want to quit are even more strongly in support of seeing retail displays banned with almost three quarters (72%) supporting the Cancer Society's call to get tobacco out of sight in shops.

Part of the reason for their support is that tobacco displays undermine attempts to quit smoking by providing regular temptation to people struggling with nicotine addiction. Nearly half of New Zealand smokers (45%) said tobacco displays made quitting harder.

"There's often a lot of victim blaming when it comes to smoking. People often don't appreciate that most smokers struggle with their smoking. If smokers get lung cancer or emphysema there is a sense that it's their own fault. But tobacco industry statements about smoking being a 'choice' are completely false. Half of smokers are struggling to quit and are having their efforts undermined because we still allow tobacco companies to advertise through shop displays," said Belinda Keenan, Cancer Society Tobacco Control Advisor.

"Clearly tobacco companies have poured resources into retail displays and see it as the main way to market their product. They do not invest this money without good reason."

The Cancer Society's call to get tobacco out of sight in shops is supported by major public health, medical, youth and children's groups.

"New Zealand prohibited most types of tobacco advertising 18 years ago, it's time to finish the job now and end retail marketing," said Ms. Keenan.

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CONTACT

Belinda Keenan
Tobacco Control Adviser
Cancer Society
Mobile: 027 276 7922
www.cancernz.org.nz
www.ProtectOurChildren.org.nz

The Cancer Society is an independent organisation which represents people with Cancer, and their families, and is not government funded.

ⁱ Geoffrey T. Fong; David Hammond; Fritz L. Laux; Mark P. Zanna; K. Michael Cummings; Ron Borland; Hana Ross. 'The near-universal experience of regret among smokers in four countries: Findings from the International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Survey.' Nicotine & Tobacco Research, Volume 6, Issue S3 December 2004, pages S341 - S351.

ⁱⁱ Ministry of Health 2007

ⁱⁱⁱ Cancer Society of New Zealand Cigarette Displays Survey, Omnibus Survey Results, March-May 2008, UMR Research. NB. The total sample size of smokers is n=563. The margin of error for sample size of 563 for a 50% figure at the '95% confidence level' is $\pm 4.1\%$.