



MEDIA RELEASE

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Community petitions Parliament to put cigarettes ‘out of sight’

Thousands of New Zealanders are putting their puff behind a petition driven by ASH, the Cancer Society and the National Heart Foundation calling on Parliament to get cigarettes out of sight, by banning retail cigarette displays.

Incoming Director of Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), Ben Youdan, says:

"Already thousands of people have signed to show their support for a ban on visible cigarette displays, and the campaign has only just got underway."

"Public support has been overwhelming," says National Heart Foundation Medical Director, Norman Sharpe. "People appreciate that this is an important step towards de-normalising smoking and achieving a truly smoke-free New Zealand."

Belinda Hughes, Tobacco Control Adviser for the Cancer Society said she was encouraged by the strong support also received from smokers:

"Once they understand the reasons behind the move, they are very supportive of it. Many of them have said they would find it so much easier to quit and remain smokefree if the temptation was removed."

The health groups say that getting rid of cigarette displays will have multiple positive effects, both making smoking seem less acceptable and normal to young people and helping people who are trying to quit.

Mr. Youdan said that banning cigarette displays would be an important step in reducing youth smoking:

"The vast majority of what the tobacco industry calls ‘new smokers’ are in fact children. Getting cigarettes out of sight is not a silver bullet, but it will significantly reduce marketing opportunities for tobacco companies."

Ms Hughes says that young people are being sent mixed messages about smoking:

“Whilst school curriculum and mass media campaigns warn about the negative health effects of smoking, they are sold as if they were a normal consumer product. But they’re not. Cigarettes are highly addictive and kill half of their long-term users. We should not allow them to be marketed to the young in this way.”

Prof. Sharpe says that getting cigarettes out of sight will also help people trying to quit smoking:

“More than half of New Zealand smokers tried to quit last year, this is something we can do to help them to succeed,” said Prof. Sharpe.

To sign a copy of the petition, people can visit: www.BanCigaretteDisplays.org.nz and download a petition.

- Ends -

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Smoke-free Day in your area

To contact the local coordinator of Smoke-free Day in your area see:
<http://www.worldsmokefreeday.org.nz/pages/regionalteams2007.html>

To find out what is happening on Smoke-free Day in your local area see:
<http://www.worldsmokefreeday.org.nz/pages/2007brightideas.html>

Background

Everyone is exposed: Smokers and non-smokers, children and adults - everyone who uses a petrol station, dairy or supermarket is exposed to cigarette displays.

Cigarette displays influence kids. Cigarette displays increase the perceived popularity of cigarettes. Prominent cigarette displays in petrol stations, dairies and supermarkets make kids more familiar with cigarettes and increase the perception that cigarettes are popular and socially acceptable. Research shows that young people who over-estimate smoking rates are more likely to become smokers.

Cigarette displays encourage impulse purchases including among teenagers, occasional smokers, and ex-smokers struggling to resist cravings and stay smoke-free. The tobacco industry knows the importance of cigarette displays in sparking impulse purchases.

Retail displays discourage and undermine attempts to quit smoking. At least half of New Zealanders who smoke have tried to quit smoking in the last 12 months. Prominent cigarette displays are a powerful temptation to someone struggling with nicotine withdrawal. Removing cigarette displays would support people trying to quit smoking.

Retail displays increase tobacco use. There is overwhelming evidence that tobacco advertising and promotion, including cigarette displays, increase overall tobacco consumption, and that a ban on such advertising and promotion would decrease consumption.

Cigarette displays are a form of promotion. With restrictions on other types of advertising and promotion, cigarette displays have become an essential part of the tobacco industry's marketing strategy.

Further information

Cancer Society of New Zealand - <http://www.BanCigaretteDisplays.org.nz>

ASH New Zealand - <http://www.ASH.org.nz/>

Note to Editor

Images available on request. Please contact Sneha Paul on tel: 021 0369579.