



**Cancer Society New Zealand
Te Kāhui Matepukupuku o Aotearoa**

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Cancer Society welcomes new smokefree initiative; people underestimate link between cancer and smoking

The Cancer Society is welcoming a new education initiative - *Face the Facts* - that presents the public with the realities of the harms caused by smoking.

Face the Facts was developed by the Health Sponsorship Council (HSC) and the Ministry of Health, and presents six stark facts about smoking.

Cancer Society Chief Executive Dalton Kelly says research shows that people still underestimate the dangers of smoking.

"For example, some smokers believe the risk of developing lung cancer is more dependent on genes, than on quitting smoking^{1, 2}. This is incorrect. Before the widespread use of cigarettes, lung cancer was a rare disease. Today, cancer of the lung and throat is the leading cause of cancer death for men, and the third most common cause of cancer death for women.³

"We hope *Face the Facts* will show once and for all how deadly smoking is, and that there has never been a better time for smokers to quit."

Mr Kelly says the first fact being highlighted - that 5000 people die each year because of smoking - is hard to comprehend because the number of deaths is so large.

"But behind each of these deaths are families who are grieving over the loss of a loved one.

¹ Oakes, W., Chapman, S., Borland, R., Balmford, J., Trotter, L. (2004). "Bulletproof skeptics in life's jungle": Which self-exemption beliefs about smoking most predict lack of progression towards quitting? *Preventative Medicine*, 39, 776-782.

² Dillard, A.J., McCaul, K.D., & Klein, W.M.P. (2006). Unrealistic optimism in smokers: Implications for smoking myth endorsement and self-protective motivation. *Journal of Health Communication*, 11, 93-102.

³ Ministry of Health. 2008. *Cancer: New Registrations and Deaths 2005*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

"There is also a huge impact on the health system. The government is currently looking to reduce cancer treatment waiting times. Imagine the impact if you took smoking-related cancers out of the equation - how much more quickly people would be able to access radiation therapy and surgery.

"Only the tobacco industry benefits from smoking. *Face the Facts* is a welcome addition to New Zealand's tobacco control programme. We hope it will remind the community of the enormous harm caused by tobacco, and motivate us all to take action to make New Zealand tobacco free."

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