

# Nathaniel takes a stand

by Martin Gibson

WATCHING friends and family suffering from nicotine addiction spurred Campion College student Nathaniel Ratapu to speak to a parliamentary select committee.

He was part of a group of seven high school students from around New Zealand, flown to Wellington by the Cancer Society to present a petition containing 20,000 signatures asking that cigarette displays be banned from stores.

For Nathaniel, it's a no-brainer.

"I don't see why anyone would be against the idea — people who go into a store to buy cigarettes could still get them, but they would be out of sight so people would be less likely to impulse buy, and young people would not see the bright shiny packaging next to sweets and pies and form a positive association with them."

There is no glamour for him in the highly-addictive, deadly, and legal drug. His mother and both grandmothers are smokers, and one of them is battling cancer as a result of taking that first experimental puff.

"It's such a bad thing to get into — kids think they can stop whenever they want, but it slowly becomes a part of their daily routine — one smoke a day, two, to a pack every four days."

"My grandmother takes a bucket full of medications, and she's given

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Nathaniel Ratapu spoke to a parliamentary select committee in support of a 20,000-signature petition calling for cigarette displays to be banned from stores.

up trying to stop, even though it's killing her. She says it's like her bread and butter, but because she spends money on tobacco she has so little healthy food in her cupboards, and that's another negative effect of smoking that people don't think about.

"I can't understand how the Government can back laws against drugs like heroin and marijuana and have tobacco — which kills many more people — staring young people in the face every time they walk into a dairy."