



Cancer Society New Zealand  
Te Kāhui Matepukupuku o Aotearoa

National Office  
Level 2, Red Cross House  
69 Molesworth Street, Thorndon  
PO Box 12700  
Wellington 6011

Telephone: 64 4 494-7270  
Facsimile: 64 4 494-7271

Websites: [www.cancernz.org.nz](http://www.cancernz.org.nz)  
[www.daffodilday.org.nz](http://www.daffodilday.org.nz)  
[www.relayforlife.org.nz](http://www.relayforlife.org.nz)  
Email: [admin@cancer.org.nz](mailto:admin@cancer.org.nz)

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Tuesday 20 April, 2010

### **It's sucking the life out of us**

Fourteen New Zealanders, including two Māori, will die today.

The same number will die tomorrow and the day after that and every other day .... all year round.

They won't die in road accidents. They won't die of old age. They won't die as a result of suicide, drowning or an adventure tourism accident.

They will die because they continue to smoke.

The Cancer Society's Chief Executive, Dalton Kelly, says active smoking is directly linked to the premature deaths of 5,000 New Zealanders including over 600 Māori, every year.

"We can't ignore the fact that current smoking rates are disproportionately high among Māori. Taking action to reduce smoking among Maori communities, in particular, should be a major health priority."

On Wednesday 21 April, 2010, the Cancer Society will be making an oral submission to the Māori Affairs Select Committee Inquiry into the tobacco industry in Aotearoa and the consequences of tobacco use for Māori.

In their submission the Society has proposed some solutions to reduce the smoking rate, including an increase in tobacco taxes and banning point-of-sale tobacco retail displays. Both these solutions are very likely to have a notable impact in reducing Māori smoking rates.

Mr Kelly also argues that the government is letting Māori smokers down saying Māori-specific cessation services receive about \$8 million from the \$40 million tobacco control budget but Māori smokers contribute over \$250 million per year in tobacco tax.

"We think a bigger slice of the smoking tax-take should be used to wean Māori smokers off a product that is killing them at alarming rates," he adds.

Mr Kelly says the Society supports wholeheartedly comments by Tariana Turia when she questions why we continue to allow tobacco to be sold.

"Stop allowing it on the shelf," she said, "and raise taxes."

"Hear, hear," says the Cancer Society. "Those actions, more than anything, will help us achieve our goal which is to reduce the incidence and impact of cancer in New Zealand."

#### **Media enquiries:**

Lynne St.Clair-Chapman

National Communications Manager

Tel 04 494 7195      Mob 027 444 4150



## The Facts

46% of Māori are daily smokers compared with 21% of non-Māori.

Māori women have the highest smoking rates at 49% (42% of Māori men smoke). The corresponding figures for non-Māori are 18% of women smoke and 24% of males smoke.

73% of Māori smokers use roll-your-own tobacco.

45% of Māori smokers report smoking indoors at home.

A major issue is that many young Māori children are smoking. The average age of Māori smoking initiation is just 11.6 years old.

22% of 14-15 year old Māori girls smoke compared with 8% of all 14-15 year old girls.

Between 2000 and 2004, lung cancer was responsible for over 31% of Māori cancer deaths, compared with 17% of non-Māori cancer deaths.

Cardiovascular disease (heart disease and stroke) death rates were two times higher for Māori than for non-Māori in the same period.

Deaths from respiratory disease were three times more frequent in Māori than in non-Māori.