

Active No-Smoking Strategy

Launceston City Council (TAS)



2003

National Category

Winner Policy

for Structural

Change

Program Summary

The Council introduced an active strategy to restrict smoking, to address growing concerns about passive smoking in public areas. As a result Launceston residents and visitors now enjoy smoke-free playgrounds, aquatic centres, council buildings, sport grounds and city parks. The first step the Council took was the high profile banning of smoking at York Park, then signs were displayed at playgrounds and swimming centres. Butt bins were placed around the perimeter of these areas to encourage compliance. As a result of this successful strategy the Launceston City Council lodged a motion at the State Local Government Conference, to encourage other councils in Tasmania to implement similar strategies. This motion was passed and other Councils are now addressing the issue.

Identifying a Heart Health Issue

Encouraging the community to reduce smoking will have positive health benefits. Providing smoke-free public areas particularly at sporting venues and playgrounds ensures that individuals, in particular children and families, are not exposed to second hand smoke. It also demonstrates the shift in societal expectations around smoking in public areas.

Smoke free playgrounds and swimming centres sends a clear message that smoking is not acceptable to the Launceston City Council in the areas where young people gather or recreate.

To be effective this strategy was backed by an education message. The Council delivered this message in partnership with organisations including the Heart Foundation.

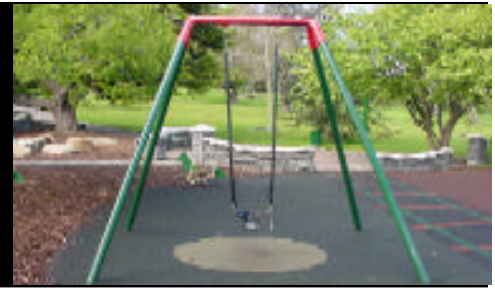


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Community Participation and Partnerships

In developing the strategy the Launceston City Council consulted with peak health groups: the Heart Foundation, State Health Department, Quit and selected medical staff. Policy research was also undertaken through groups like the AFL, who set policy on smoking at major sporting venues. The Council also sought legal advice on issues relevant to smoking around playgrounds.

The consultation was undertaken via phone conversations, reference to policy documents and research. The AFL the consultation was undertaken in conjunction with the AFL Ground Managers Group.

Consultation data was used to develop and modify the strategy over a three month period. Certain aspects of the strategy were introduced as a result of an AFL directive.

In 2003 Council stated that "As the active strategy develops Council will undertake further consultation with relevant groups to refine and implement the strategy".

Innovation

This strategy shows originality as no other Council in Tasmania has taken the steps that the Launceston City Council has taken and developed and enforced a no smoking strategy in public places.

The first step the Council took to implement the strategy was on the advice of the AFL, to ban smoking within the arena of York Park and enforce this message with signage and announcements over the PA system before and during AFL games.

This set the standard that the Council desired to achieve. Key areas that needed to be addressed were identified with the Heart Foundation – playgrounds, events and buildings.

Signs have been displayed around playground and swimming centre sites prohibiting smoking. Butt bins are provided away from the play areas and outside the swimming centres to encourage compliance with this strategy.

A proactive review of buildings controlled by Council resulted in smoking restrictions being phased in as leases expire.



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Outcomes

In 2003 this was a relatively new strategy and long term effects were not yet known. However, there was positive press on the measures at the time, particularly in regard to the prohibition of smoking around playgrounds and swimming centres.

The Council stated that "Three AFL matches have been run under the new strategy and no complaints about abuse of the strategy, or complaints about passive smoking we received". Logistical staff from the Australian Rugby Union witnessed the first AFL game and they made positive comments about the policy, its communication to the general public and degree of compliance from patrons.

Mothers groups made very positive comments about the ban on smoking around playgrounds. They even offered to assist Council in enforcing this policy, by reporting persistent offenders to Council for action.

Council spend about \$10,000 per annum to implement this strategy. This is spent on signage, education and refinement of the active strategy.

The Council said that "The strategy will be reviewed over a period of time and opportunities to expand the strategy to other areas and events will be taken". Council use specialist agencies to deliver the education message – thus the Launceston Community are exposed to the latest research on the effects of smoking on heart health.

As a result of this strategy the Launceston City Council lodged a motion at the State Local Government Conference, to encourage other councils in Tasmania to implement similar strategies. This motion was passed and other councils are now addressing this issue.

After Winning a Heart Foundation Local Government Award

Winning the Award has impacted on the Launceston City Council and the Active No Smoking Strategy. In the six months after the Awards the Council received enquires from Councils nationally who were interested in implementing the strategy in their area. The impact on the strategy has been the refinement and firming of policies. Smoking restrictions were previously enforced through persuasion, whereas now they are policed by trained attendants in sports arenas and in playgrounds no-smoking signs, butt out bins and the influence of peers in the vicinity have assisted to reduce smoking. The prize money allowed the Council to put up more no-smoking signs and promote the strategy through newspaper adverts. Restrictions on smoking in Launceston have now become common practice.

