

Case study: Opotiki

1.1 Background

Opotiki District Council adopted a comprehensive smokefree outdoor public spaces policy in 2007, making all council events and public places smokefree including beaches, parks, playgrounds, sports fields and reserves.

The policy was initiated and driven by Toi Te Ora – Public Health (Toi Te Ora), part of the Bay of Plenty District Health Board. The project's goal was to normalise non-smoking in public places to encourage positive role-modelling for young people in the Opotiki District.



1.2 Implementation

The Opotiki smokefree project was based around Toi Te Ora's *Social Environments' Territorial Local Authority Engagement Strategy 2007*, which is intended to build strong relationships between Toi Te Ora and councils to create healthy social environments and improve public health outcomes.

1.2.1 Approach to council

In June 2007, Toi Te Ora's Social Environments Team met with Opotiki District Council staff to deliver a presentation about the aims of the Social Environments Programme and to introduce the smokefree outdoor public spaces policy project.

1.2.2 Initial responses

Reactions from Council staff and management were generally positive. Following initial meetings, the Council's Parks and Reserves Manager agreed to progress the smokefree outdoor public spaces proposal to the Sport and Recreation Committee for consideration.

A PowerPoint presentation explaining the benefits of smokefree outdoor places was prepared for the meeting with the Sport and Recreation Committee and Toi Te Ora brought community members with them to also speak in support.

1.2.3 Policy development

Toi Te Ora used their own internal standard project plan template to organise and plan the smokefree project and based it on similar projects used with other councils such as Upper Hutt and South Taranaki.

A background document was written to help people understand the need for a smokefree policy. It highlighted how smokefree outdoor spaces would enhance and contribute to Opotiki District Council's Community Outcomes of protecting the natural environment:

We will support and encourage environmentally friendly development, carefully manage land ownership, growth and development and support initiatives that tackle environmental issues and improve understanding of the environment

The policy itself was drafted with help and advice from the HSC and the Cancer Society.

1.2.4 Policy adoption

A final draft of the policy was presented to the Sport and Recreation Committee in November 2007 and passed on to the full Council for consideration. It was finally adopted in December 2007.

1.2.5 Budget

Opotiki District Council allocated a budget of around \$15,000 to cover the implementation of the policy. Toi Te Ora, HSC and the Cancer Society also provided financial assistance.

The budget covered signage costs, concept design by a local artist, posters, paid advertising, communications work, and policy evaluation.

1.2.6 Promotion

Advertorials and advertisements were placed in the local press, and a radio campaign was launched in both English and Te Reo Māori.

1.2.7 Media coverage

The Opotiki smokefree outdoor public spaces policy received a significant amount of coverage in regional and national media. This included the *New Zealand Herald*, provincial newspapers, Rock FM radio, and a photograph of the new smokefree signage was broadcast on *Campbell Live*.

1.3 Evaluation

Evaluation methods included KAB (knowledge, attitude, behaviour) surveys of Opotiki residents, counting cigarette butts before and after, observing the public, and interviewing stakeholders about the process.

1.3.1 What worked well

Having a single point of contact from Toi Te Ora working closely with Opotiki Council staff was effective in producing results and achieving clear communication back and forth.

1.4 Suggestions

The following suggestions to health promoters working on smokefree policy implementation come from a key member of the Toi Te Ora Social Environments Team:

- Know your council – utilise any personal connections within the council. Get to know who the appropriate staff members are (e.g. Parks and Reserves Managers, Community and Recreation Managers) and then plan a well-prepared approach.
- Council staff resource – be sure to reassure councils that you (and your organisation) are a resource and are available to help and assist with policy writing, report compilation, funding, liaising with local, regional and national organisations for support.
- Stick to your guns and emphasise key messages when council members go off track during discussions. Having an answer for every question/concern they raise is a powerful tool of persuasion.
- BE LOUD ABOUT IT and share the information. New Zealand is such a small country so we should be sharing all information and resources to make everyone's job easier. The success of the policy relies heavily on promotion and education.