

## Butt Out... Please

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The South Taranaki District Council's 'smoke-free park' policy started to take shape today with the first signs, asking people not to smoke in its parks, being erected throughout the district. Initially the signs will go up in at least one park in each town and others will follow as signs are gradually replaced.

The 'smoke-free park' policy is believed to be the first in New Zealand where a local authority is actively discouraging people from smoking in parks and playgrounds. South Taranaki Mayor, Mary Bourke, believed the Policy was a good one with a pragmatic approach. "It is not coming down on anyone with a big stick. We aren't banning smoking in parks but by encouraging people not to smoke in our parks and playgrounds. We are recognising the dangers of smoking."

Group Manager of Community Services and Development, Jan Martin, who helped develop the Policy, said it was about the Council making a stand in terms of desirable role modelling.

"The purpose of the Policy is to demonstrate leadership in promoting a positive message, that a smoke free lifestyle is both desirable and the norm in South Taranaki", said Jan. "We know that we cannot enforce a ban on smoking in parks, but it is not about enforcement, it's about leadership and role modelling. We can appeal to smokers to consider the interests of others and to be positive role models for our children, We want Taranaki fresh air to remain just that – something to be enjoyed by everyone."

The Policy also includes actions which would make all Council workplaces, vehicles, Council-owned enclosed public facilities [such as Halls] and Council-owned Swimming Pools, smoke free.

"The majority of pool users are children and by banning smoking at the pools children would not be exposed, on Council premises, to second-hand smoke, or role models who smoke", said Jan.

As part of its Smoke Free Strategy, the Council has also decided to support business and pro-actively manage street litter by providing cigarette butt receptacles free of charge to identified licensed premises and at cost to any other business who may wish to purchase them.

The South Taranaki District Council's policy has drawn solid support from 'Smokefree' (Health Sponsorship Council) and the Cancer Society who have both contributed funds towards the signage.



Taranaki Cancer Society Health Promoter, Christine Brouwers, is extremely excited about the Council's policy and the positive message it was sending to the South Taranaki community. "This is exactly the sort of ground breaking leadership that our communities need and deserve. The health of our nation depends on positive action such as this and I can't commend the South Taranaki District Council enough for being so courageous. We are all very excited," she said.