

5<sup>th</sup> November 2006

David Vince  
Environmental Health Manager  
Timaru District Council  
PO Box 522  
TIMARU

Dear Mr Vince,

**Submission for Bylaw Review: Stage Five**

We write concerning Chapter 17 of your Bylaw Review: Parks Reserves, Beaches and Tracks. Our committee would like to make a comment on the council making their parks and playgrounds smokefree.

**WHO WE ARE:**

Smokefree South Canterbury is an intersectoral group that strives to promote smokefree lifestyles and environments for the whole community, and is a voice for the South Canterbury in an advocacy role. Our children are our biggest asset and we strongly encourage you to look toward Smokefree Parks and Playgrounds as the next step to ensuring a positive future for them.

**WHY IS TOBACCO DANGEROUS TO OUR CHILDREN?**

Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death in New Zealand, accounting for nearly 5,000 deaths per year. Smoking increases the risk of developing diseases of the respiratory and circulatory systems. These include cancers of the lung, oral cavity, pharynx, larynx, oesophagus and pancreas. Smoking also increases the risk of developing diseases of the urinary tract, pelvis, bladder and digestive tract.

Half of the people who smoke today and continue smoking, will eventually be killed by tobacco. Half of them will die in middle age. Tobacco is the only consumer product that kills half its users when used as the manufacturer intends.

**SUCCESS WITH SMOKEFREE ENVIRONMENTS TO DATE:**

New Zealand has successfully implemented a ban on smoking in all indoor workplaces, including bars, restaurants and clubs. Over 90 percent of the public support workers rights to work in an environment free from second-hand smoke. Around two thirds of all New Zealanders support the expansion of smokefree areas to outdoor areas that children use. All schools and early childhood centres are smokefree, 24 hours/7 days a week. Why not extend this further by making outdoor environments smokefree? Experience with smokefree outdoor spaces has shown that smokers are generally very considerate, and will smoke outside smokefree areas when asked or if the appropriate signage is around.

## **WHY DO WE NEED SMOKEFREE PARKS/PLAYGROUNDS?**

Smokefree parks and playgrounds are all about protecting children and young people from the effects of smoking. The recent development of the 'Reducing Youth Smoking Initiation Framework' identifies expanding smokefree environments to outdoor settings as a key goal. We know from research that increasing smokefree environments will contribute towards fewer young people beginning to smoke – the less they see smoking, the less 'normal' it will seem. Few parents, smoking or non-smoking, don't want their children to become smokers, so to reduce the visibility of smoking will potentially reduce the risk of initiation in these children. By not smoking around young people at any time, the smoker acts as a positive role model, again reducing the child's risk of initiation.

By making parks and playgrounds smokefree, the Council will also be creating a supportive environment for former smokers to remain smokefree and encouraging active smokers to quit.

## **HOW WILL SMOKEFREE PARKS MAKE SMOKING LESS 'NORMAL'?**

Young people tend to believe that more people smoke than is actually the case. For example, a 2004 study found that over 50% of girls and 40% of boys thought that half or three-quarters of their peers smoked. In fact, only 11% of their peers were smokers.

Research indicates that seeing people around them smoke, contribute to young people's tendency to overestimate the number of smokers. This over-estimation makes it more likely that young people will take up smoking, as they mistakenly believe that smoking is a common activity and 'everybody does it'.

Smokefree parks/playgrounds will reduce children and young people's exposure to smoking, better reflecting actual smoking rates.

## **SECOND-HAND SMOKE**

Although Smokefree parks and playgrounds are *primarily* about denormalising smoking, reducing visibility of smoking and creating positive smokefree role-modelling for our children and young people, if our children are standing close to someone who is smoking, they may be forced to inhale their second-hand smoke.

Second-hand smoke is a mixture of smoke breathed out by the smoker (mainstream smoke) and smoke released from the lit cigarette (sidestream smoke). It contains cancer causing and other toxic substances such as acetone (paint stripper), ammonia (toilet cleaner), hydrogen cyanide (rate killer), DDT (insecticide) and carbon monoxide (car exhaust fumes).

Second-hand smoke is linked to coronary heart disease, lung cancer, acute stroke, eye and nasal irritation, and nasal sinus cancer. Children are especially vulnerable to second-hand smoke as their vital organs are smaller and more delicate and, therefore, can be

seriously affected by tobacco smoke and the chemicals it contains. Some children are also in situations where they can't remove themselves from this smoke ie pushchairs etc.

### **WHAT BENEFIT IS IT TO THE DISTRICT COUNCIL BY HAVING SMOKEFREE PARKS/PLAYGROUNDS?**

A smokefree parks/playgrounds policy gives the Council an opportunity to promote a healthier community and the clean green image its parks and playgrounds have in the District. It creates a healthy environment in the recreation areas of our city. But it is important smoking is not just a health issue- but one that has broad ranging impacts on the wellbeing of communities. This includes the drain on the economy, increasing health inequalities and cultural losses as a result in premature death. The Timaru District offers a range of fantastic sporting facilities and top range playgrounds – wouldn't it be great to have these free from cigarette butts that litter them, impacting on the environmental wellbeing of South Canterbury.

Currently Council owned swimming pools are smokefree-and have been for a number of years. Some sports grounds and specific sporting venues have undertaken a smokefree policy – so already we are seeing steps being taken in smokefree outdoor settings.

### **WHAT ABOUT OTHER AREAS?**

Many local councils in New Zealand are choosing to ban or actively discourage smoking in parks and playgrounds.

South Taranaki and Upper Hutt District Councils have both recently developed a smokefree policy which **encourages** people to abstain from smoking in Council-owned parks, playgrounds and swimming pools. The Council felt that it should be seen as providing community leadership and acting as a role model.

South Wairapa District Council have adopted smokefree playgrounds and Queenstown Lakes District are currently in the process of playgrounds and swimming pools being smokefree..

Napier City Council and Gisborne District Council are also in the process of investigating the development of smokefree policies covering their open space areas. Wellington City Council has adopted a policy banning smoking in the area known as Cable Car Lane.

Internationally there has been movement, New South Wales and Queensland hve banned smoking on their beaches, at entrances to buildings, sporting fields and venues and al fresco dining areas to promote healthy communities. At least 12 city councils in California and one regional council have passed regulations. These councils have reported little difficulty enforcing regulations that rely largely on the public monitoring this.

## **HOW COULD/WOULD IT WORK?**

Smokefree parks and playgrounds that our committee are promoting are low cost, yet have a very high return in terms of promoting good health. There would be no need for enforcement *per se* but appropriate signage and publicity focusing on public education would encourage the public to maintain a clean, healthy environment in areas that are primarily used by young people for sporting and recreation activity. It would require voluntary compliance- that other Councils have reported to be very successful in enforcing any of their regulations.

The Smokefree Committee have already developed such signage and are in the process of pre-testing these with the community as well as consulting the community and gauging their support for smokefree parks and playgrounds. We plan to submit the findings to the Council once it is finished and would offer assistance to the Council in the way of partial funding of signage and expertise in this field.

Should you have any questions on this submission please address to:

The Secretary  
Smokefree South Canterbury Committee  
PO Box 510  
Timaru  
Ph: 684-0660

We thank you for your time and wish to be heard in support of this submission.

Leola Ryder  
**Secretary**

Kate McFarlane  
**Cancer Society**  
**Smokefree South Canterbury Committee**