

Letters to the editor *Guidelines*

Do you feel strongly about a public health issue? Write a letter to the editor using our simple letter writing techniques, list of email addresses and examples of sample letters (alcohol, housing, tobacco, oral health and preventing family violence):

- All newspapers require your name, personal address and daytime telephone number.
- Do not send your letter as an attachment. Use cut and paste.
- Check the word length accepted by the newspaper (usually around 150 words). Longer letters may be published but could be edited in a way you do not agree with.
- The brevity of letters means you can only make one or two points. Make sure your arguments are set out in a logical way.
- Get someone unfamiliar with the issue to read the letter – does it make sense to that person?
- Stick to the issues and avoid personal attacks (even if you are responding to a personal attack).
- Try to respond to an issue as soon as possible.
- Proofread your letter carefully and check your word length.
- Letters can be emailed –put *letter to the editor* in the subject line.
- If you have any questions or want a letter to the editor checked, phone (04) 472 3060 or email: pha.media@actrix.co.nz

Email addresses of main daily papers

Letter to editor in subject line/cut and paste text

Ashburton Guardian	enquiries@theguardian.co.nz
Bay of Plenty Times	editor@bopp.co.nz
Dominion Post	letters@dompost.co.nz
Daily News	editor@tnl.co.nz
Daily Post	news@dailypost.co.nz
Gisborne Herald	editorial@gisborneherald.co.nz
Greymouth Evening Star	editor@greystar.co.nz
Hawkes Bay Today	editor@hbtoday.co.nz
Manawatu Standard	editor@msl.co.nz
Marlborough Express	mailbox@marlexpress.co.nz
Nelson Mail	chiefreporter@nelsonmail.co.nz
New Zealand Herald	letters@nzherald.co.nz
Northern Advocate	editor@northernadvocate.co.nz
Oamaru Mail	news@oamarumail.co.nz
Otago Daily Times	odt.editor@alliedpress.co.nz
Sunday Star Times	feedback@star-times.co.nz
Taranaki Daily News	editor@tnl.co.nz
The Press	editorial@press.co.nz
Timaru Herald	editor@timaruherald.co.nz
Waikato Times	editor@waikatotimes.co.nz
Wairarapa Times Age	editor@age.co.nz
Wanganui Chronicle –go to:	http://www.wanganuichronicle.co.nz/info/feedback/

West Coast Times	editor@greystar.co.nz
Westport News	editorial@westportnews.co.nz

(Please contact us if any of these email addresses cannot be accessed or change)

Sample letters (We have not included personal contact details)
Check out www.pha.org.nz/advocacy for PHA policies for guidance on policy

Inequalities

Friday, July 23, 2004
Editor NZ Herald

When is the Auckland community going to wake up and realize the housing shortage is reaching crisis point? The latest Council-commissioned report shows 972 people waiting for state homes in Henderson and high demand in Waitakere.

Increasingly we hear reports of families living in tents and garages. These homeless children face disrupted education and an uncertain future? We also know these children are at greater risk of a range of serious infectious diseases.

It is good news that the Friendship Centre Trust and Housing New Zealand hope to open an emergency house in west Auckland later this year but one house cannot accommodate the number of families without housing.

The housing crisis needs a concerted effort by Government and Councils. All New Zealand children deserve to be raised in an adequate standard of housing.
Dr Gay Keating

Tobacco

Editor Northern Advocate

It is tragic news that Northland tobacco smokers are dying at the rate of one a day (9 June). It is equally sad that doctors are reporting 30 year olds with incurable lung diseases.

Northland Health's Pauline Allan-Downs makes a good point when she talks about the low amount of money government puts into smoking cessation, while tobacco related disease is costing the DHB\$9.2million each year. That's just the cost to the health system and doesn't reflect the cost to families and the wider whanau, as well as the suffering.

We need immediate action to ensure the number of smokers drops substantially, and we need to aim for a smoking rate below five percent by 2020. In the meantime I appeal to smokers to take their cigarettes outside to protect the health of their children and other family members. That one simple step would help improve the health of the Northland community.

Dr Gay Keating

Family violence

Editor Dominion Post

The Dominion Post's report (Friday July 19) that 8500 children in New Zealand will be sexually abused for the first time this year is a shocking wake-up call for this country. The report quotes research by Massey University, which found the total cost to society from child abuse was \$2.4 million a year. Social costs include psychological problems and drug abuse.

The Public Health Association strongly supports recommendations by the study's authors that prevention of child abuse should be a priority. While it could be argued that poverty is only one of the causes of child abuse, it is clearly a factor in many cases.

Respected groups such as UNICEF and the Institute of Public Policy of AUT have identified poverty as one of the major causes of family violence. It is time to listen to the widening number of groups calling for all political parties to take part in a summit on ending poverty. The cost of ignoring these serious social problems is too high.

Gay Keating

Editor

Despite public sorrow over high profile cases of child abuse, New Zealand is reluctant to take any action (Dominion Post 7 October). Any discussion about possible repeal of Section 59 of the Crimes Act gets bogged down in debate about parents' rights to smack their children.

It is time parents realised that anti-smacking legislation is not intended to bag parents who succumb to an occasional light slap on the hand. Legislation is simply designed to step in when parents are abusing their children in the name of discipline.

Retaining Section 59 means adults who assault children can use the law as a defence. This defence is not open to adults who assault other adults.

More New Zealand children die from maltreatment than in any other OECD country but at the same time some political parties describe anti-smacking legislation as unrealistic. New Zealand can't have it both ways. We are outraged and bewildered when parents who repeatedly use "discipline" end up killing their children but at the same time we don't want any rules. Surely it is time for some realism.

Dr Gay Keating

Oral health

Friday, 7 November 2003

Editor

Congratulations to the Southland District Council for starting public consultation on introducing fluoridation to rural communities. Water fluoridation is a safe, effective and cheap way of improving children's dental health. It is estimated that water fluoridation prevents between 58,000 and 267,000 decayed, missing or filled teeth in New Zealand per year.

The Public Health Association hopes the small number of individuals opposed to fluoridation do not deter rural Southland communities from taking on board an effective health measure. A scan of anti-fluoridation websites shows some groups are worried fluoridation is a government plot but the highly reputable Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has included water fluoridation in the list of the *Ten Great Public Health Achievements 1900-1999*.

Alcohol

Thursday, 09 November 2006

Editor

The *North and South* article on alcohol highlights many of our confused attitudes towards alcohol and the perception among many young people that binge drinking is normal behaviour. Health warning labels on alcohol containers are an urgent priority as these young binge drinkers are unaware of the serious health consequences of binge drinking. Some teenage bingers may initially choose to ignore these warnings but both young people and their parents need to be aware heavy drinkers risk death from trauma, cancer, alcohol dependency, heart arrhythmias, liver cirrhosis and acute pancreatitis.

While education is important, the most successful way of reducing hazardous drinking by young people is to raise alcohol taxes. There is evidence that young drinkers and heavy drinkers are sensitive to price rises and this approach is probably the single most effective intervention available to government. There is international evidence that alcohol taxes can reduce road traffic injuries and fatalities, with one study estimating that maintaining the beer tax at its real 1951 value would have reduced motor vehicle road traffic fatalities in the United States by 11.5 percent annually

Taxes can also raise revenue for alcohol education and to fund health services.

As a society we need to think about safer socialising for adults as well as young people. We must promote non-alcohol sponsorship for clubs and sporting codes so that we change the expectation that drinking up large is what you do when you are grown-up.
Dr Gay Keating