

## **Tobacco Report a landmark in smokefree initiatives**

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The Māori Affairs Select Committee's final report on tobacco is a landmark in smokefree initiatives, according to the Public Health Association (PHA).

The Select Committee's report, released today, results from its inquiry into the tobacco industry and the consequences of tobacco use for Māori. Its recommendations underscore a strategy to halve smoking rates by 2015, as the first step towards a smokefree New Zealand by 2025.

The PHA's National Executive Officer Dr Gay Keating said the report not only showed the tragic toll tobacco has taken on Māori and on New Zealand as a whole, but sets a clear path for the future.

Dr Keating says she is pleased the Select Committee has taken up the recommendation by the PHA and many other groups for a coordinated plan of action.

"The Select Committee has clearly understood that to halve tobacco use New Zealand needs to tackle the problems on all fronts.

"Government needs to act to stop tobacco marketing, reduce tobacco supply, especially to young people, continue campaigns to remind people that most New Zealanders don't smoke ("de-normalise smoking"), and increase cessation support."

Dr Keating says tobacco control needs dedicated leadership such as the Select Committee proposal for a Tobacco Control Authority.

However, she says that for a national plan to work, it will need strong government support and will need to be well funded.

"The Select Committee's report has shown how much tobacco costs New Zealand, but long-term investment is essential to reduce those social and economic costs. Health campaigns and cessation services need to be supported, and progress needs to be monitored and reported back to the people of New Zealand."

New Zealand is party to the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, and was recently rated fourth highest in the OECD for successful smoking cessation programmes.

Dr Keating said that, in order to build on that success, New Zealand's quit campaigns also had to be well targeted towards those needing them most, including Māori, 45% of whom smoke – more than double the rate for the rest of the population.

She congratulated the Select Committee for holding the tobacco industry to account, and for its courage and vision for the future.

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