

31 May 2016

Speech – Dr Prudence Stone, Director, The Smokefree Coalition

Launch: Wellington City Council Smokefree Action Plan

Te Wharewaka o Poneke, Wellington Waterfront, 11.30am

Tena koutou tena koutou tena koutou katoa. Happy World Smokefree Day!

The Smokefree Coalition congratulates the Wellington City Council for its Smokefree Action Plan for Wellington. I know first-hand the years of leadership, collaboration, public support and advocacy it took for those involved to bring it to this stage of life, where we can at last celebrate its launch.

This is just the pregnancy and delivery, if you will, of evidence-based policy to achieve our goal of a smokefree Wellington.

To raise and nurture this plan to maturity, will take continued leadership, collaboration, public support and advocacy. Some here may be there in 2025, but most of us will need to ensure great succession of others to the role we have played, as we move on.

A plan like this

- gives the local sector a partnership with council, making it easier to reach those who smoke and make a difference to their lives.
- gives the community turangawaewae, upon which they base their collective spirit and vision of a world free from tobacco
- gives our children pride, to grow up in a world where there is strong leadership in their best interests, which are smokefree

It takes all this because tobacco control has an enemy, a very powerful enemy. People driven not by the public health of their community, but by the profit motive, inside the tobacco industry, and throughout its vast network of suppliers across our land.

On virtually every street corner throughout Wellington's region, you can find tobacco. And retailers are found flouting the law, selling to minors.

This Smokefree Action plan for Wellington nurtures and raises a culture of quitting, but let's also start thinking about how to reduce tobacco's supply and remove the right to sell tobacco, from retailers who break the law and supply tobacco to our children.

In public health we tend to focus our work on the behaviour of those who smoke. We think carefully about how to best support their quitting. You can tell how closely Wellington City Council has worked with us, because this is a plan full of such careful thinking:

- Expansion of the spaces designated smokefree will provide more frequent incentives to quit
- making events smokefree will de-normalise smoking, preventing a new generation's uptake
- networking with services will provide us more opportunities to provide support and nicotine replacement to those giving quitting a go.

I congratulate Wellington City council for a plan that looks toward incentivising quitting and de-normalising smoking wherever children are.

But we can still nurture the plan to include eliminating tobacco altogether. To do this, we must address the supply of tobacco in the city. In the years to come as we nurture and raise this plan, we

cannot turn a blind eye to the endless temptation for those who smoke, of tobacco left uncontrolled at the retail counter.

We should explore an effective bylaw which enables us to register and license tobacco retailers, controlling their right to sell tobacco, and removing that right when they're found to flout our law.

Or better still, we need alongside us in public health, the strong leadership, collaboration, public support and advocacy of Wellington City Council to tell central government to introduce this measure nationwide.

And speaking of central government, I want to take just a moment to congratulate the Minister for ensuring tobacco taxation stays part of our cache of tobacco control measures.

But I think it's important to note, however, that five months ago, there was no sign of tobacco excise taxation in the Finance Minister's Budget Statement. Here is an example, then, of how our leadership, collaboration, public support and advocacy, ensured an evidence-based measure didn't fall off the government's policy agenda.

And despite five years ago, committing to making Aotearoa New Zealand Auahi Kore – smokefree, by 2025, there is still no National Smokefree Action Plan by central government.

Wellington City Council, along with many other local and regional councils, leads by example – that is, without waiting for central government before setting their own action plan in place to achieve this goal in their own region.

Even more reason why we cannot leave the supply of tobacco outside our domain of local council planning.

As we raise and nurture this Smokefree Action Plan let's extend it to encompass the work of controlling and reducing rogue retailers and tobacco's supply.

To all involved in the leadership, collaboration, public support and advocacy it is going to take, I wish you the very best and my congratulations.