

Media Release, 17 August 2005

SALES FIGURES SHOW SUPPORT FOR SMOKEFREE BARS

Latest figures showing that retail sales for bars and clubs increased 3.4 percent in the June 2005 quarter indicate that people are supporting smokefree hospitality venues says the Smokefree Coalition and Action on Smoking and Health (ASH).

The figures, released this week, show that seasonally adjusted bar and club retail sales increased 3.4 percent from the June quarter last year, while café and restaurant retail sales have increased 2 percent. Smoking inside in licensed premises has not been allowed since 10 December 2004.

Smokefree Coalition Director Leigh Sturgiss says that the latest figures indicate that fears about loss of profits following the smoking ban appear to be unfounded.

“These latest figures show that sales have rebounded, following an initial downturn. The time period includes the first part of the Lion's tour – showing that far from being put off by New Zealand's smokefree laws, tourists have embraced them.”

Leigh Sturgiss says that actual monthly sales for bars and clubs increased 2.2 percent for April, stayed the same for May and increased 7.5 percent for June, compared with the same months in 2004.

Becky Freeman, Director of ASH, says that the latest figures are a sign that New Zealand is seeing similar results to other countries and jurisdictions that have introduced smokefree bars.

“Sales do tend to dip initially, but quickly recover – and that is what seems to be happening here. While a few smokers may initially stay away from bars, they soon start coming back. And of course bars attract new patrons from the 75 percent of New Zealanders who don’t smoke, who used to stay away from smoky pubs.”

The Statistics New Zealand figures show that seasonally adjusted retail sales for the June 2005 quarter for bars and clubs were \$276 million, compared with \$268 million in the June 2004 quarter. Café and restaurant sales for the June 2005 quarter were \$812 million, compared with \$746 million in the June 2004 quarter.

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