



**Media Release**  
**Associations between tobacco industry and universities must be prohibited, says Smokefree Coalition**

**Embargoed until 12.01am Tuesday 22 November 2005**

The Smokefree Coalition is calling on New Zealand universities to introduce formal policies that prohibit them from working with the tobacco industry. The call follows revelations in an article by University of Otago researchers that associations between universities and the tobacco industry have continued until at least 2004.

Smokefree Coalition director Leigh Sturgiss says that the tobacco industry is currently desperate to be seen as 'socially responsible'.

"Now that the industry can no longer claim that smoking isn't harmful, it is trying to reposition itself as a caring and responsible corporate. Being able to say that it works with respected academic institutions is one way of achieving this.

"The tobacco industry knows that associations with New Zealand universities will give it more credibility in the eyes of the public, and add legitimacy to its research.

"Such associations risk universities remaining silent about industry behaviour and tobacco harm, university research being perverted by the industry, and the diversion of public, scientific and government attention from tobacco harm."

Leigh Sturgiss says that not one of New Zealand's eight universities currently has a policy about working with the tobacco industry.

"These guys are not selling bed socks. They are making billions from a product that kills well over half of its consumers. Staying away from them should be a no-brainer for universities."

She urges all universities to introduce policies against associations with the tobacco industry.

"These policies should be formal, explicit, comprehensive and effectively implemented."

For further information, including a copy of the paper, contact:

- Leigh Sturgiss on 0274 591 664 or 04 472 0157 or
- George Thomson (article co-author) 04 918 6054 (wk), 04 478 9968 (hm), email: [gthomson@wnmeds.ac.nz](mailto:gthomson@wnmeds.ac.nz). Please note that George Thomson will not be available for comment from midday Tuesday 22 November.

### **Details of paper**

*Associations between universities and the tobacco industry: What institutional policies limit these associations?* George Thomson, Louise Signal, Department of Public Health, Wellington School of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Otago. Published in: *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 22 November 2005

### **Abstract**

This paper examines the extent of associations between the tobacco industry and New Zealand universities, and the institutional mechanisms that have been used to limit such associations. Tobacco industry documents were searched for associations between New Zealand universities and the tobacco industry. The stratagems used by New Zealand universities, funders, professional societies and government to limit such associations were analysed, using written requests, website surveys and interviews. Philip Morris invested at least US\$790,000 into research at the University of Auckland during 1988--96, and other associations between tobacco companies and New Zealand universities have continued until at least 2004.

There are still few formal policies in New Zealand to prevent such associations. In contrast, a number of prominent Australian universities formally limit their associations with the tobacco industry. If the evidence of harm to the public interest from associations with the tobacco industry is accepted, then, despite the risk to academic freedom, formal policies to address such associations may be warranted. To be most effective, policies by research institutions and funders on tobacco industry associations should be formal and explicit, and also need to be comprehensive and effectively implemented.

Contact Leigh Sturgiss for a copy of the full article.