



SMOKEFREE BARS HAVE NOT HURT BUSINESS, STUDY FINDS

Media statement, embargoed to 9am, Thursday 8 December 2005

Twelve months on, a report on the effects of smokefree bars and restaurants has found no negative impact on retail sales, tourism or employment. This is contrary to the predictions of opponents, who said that smokefree bars legislation would have serious economic consequences for the hospitality industry. Workplaces in New Zealand, including bars, restaurants, clubs and casinos were required to be smokefree inside from 10 December 2004.

The report, published today by the Asthma and Respiratory Foundation, considered a number of indicators including the effect of smokefree bars and restaurants on smoking behaviour, public opinion, economic data and compliance levels.

Smokefree Coalition director Leigh Sturgiss says that it comes as no surprise that the report finds retail trade figures for bars and clubs remain the same overall since the introduction of the Act.

“While there was an initial downturn in bar and club sales in March 2005, this quickly rebounded, with sales up three percent in the June 2005 quarter and almost one percent in the September 2005 quarter over the same period last year.

“This is consistent with results from other jurisdictions that have gone smokefree in hospitality venues, and shows that dire predictions from the hospitality industry about the financial effects of smokefree bars were totally unfounded.”

Figures from the Household Labour Force Survey show increased employment in pubs, bars and taverns in each of the March, June and September quarters of 2005, compared to the same periods in 2004.

Action of Smoking and Health (ASH) director Becky Freeman says that the report found high compliance with the ban, a fact that she puts down to strong public support for the measure.

“With nearly 70 percent of the population supporting smokefree bars, compliance becomes far less of an issue. Opponents to the legislation warned that we would see ‘smoke police’ bursting into premises to see if anyone was smoking. In reality, bar workers and patrons alike appreciate breathing smokefree air, and compliance is at 97 percent.”

The report also found that there has been an increase in the patronage of bars and cafes by non-smokers, suggesting that they have been attracted to these venues by the smokefree environment

Findings include:

- retail trade figures for bars, clubs, cafes and restaurants remained strong for the March, June and September quarters of 2005
- strong public support for smokefree bars and restaurants, with 67 percent supporting a complete ban on smoking in bars and pubs,

compared to only 38 percent in 2001; and 80 percent supporting a complete ban in restaurants

- high compliance with the legislation, with 97 percent of bars and taverns being smokefree in the latest survey
- increased employment in pubs, taverns and bars, and in cafes and restaurants in the March, June and September quarters of 2005, compared to the same periods in 2004
- an increase in overseas visitor numbers by four percent compared with the year ended September 2004
- a decrease in socially-cued smoking between 2003 and 2005, suggesting that smokers smoke less when they are not able to smoke indoors in a social setting
- increased calls to the Quitline in December 2004 and January 2005, suggesting that many people were prompted to quit as a result of the legislation
- no further decline in the quantity of tobacco and cigarettes released for sale by tobacco companies, but a continuing decline in the amount of tobacco and cigarettes actually sold.

A copy of the report can be viewed on the Asthma and Respiratory Foundation website: www.asthmanz.co.nz.

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