



POLITICIANS URGED TO INCREASE TOBACCO TAX TO STOP DEATHS

Media statement, embargoed to 12.15pm, Wednesday 15 February 2006

One New Zealander will die from smoking in the time it takes for politicians to consider submissions today. That was the message from Smokefree Coalition Director Mark Peck and Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) Director Becky Freeman to the Finance and Expenditure Committee. They urged the committee to raise the price of tobacco products to reduce tobacco deaths.

“Around 5000 New Zealanders die each year from tobacco-related illnesses – that’s about 14 deaths a day. In the time it takes this committee to hear submissions on the budget policy statement¹, another person will die,” Mark Peck said.

“The most effective way of getting people to quit smoking, or cut down, is to make cigarettes and tobacco more expensive.”

Becky Freeman said that the Government must increase tobacco tax now in order to prevent deaths in the future.

“Price is a key economic tool to discourage smoking uptake by youth as well as acting as an incentive for people to quit smoking. Tobacco products have

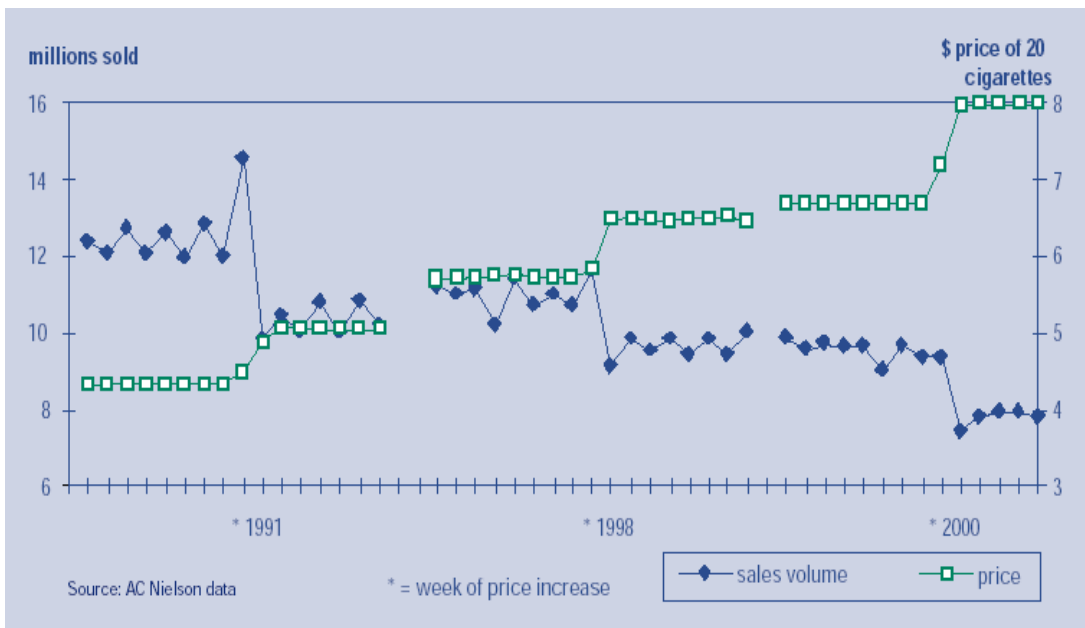
¹ The Budget Policy Statement is the document in which the Government outlines the general direction of the May/June budget.

become relatively more affordable over the past six years - we haven't had a one-off increase in tobacco taxation since 2000. Meanwhile wages have gone up, making cigarettes more affordable."

They submitted that a significant proportion of taxation revenue gathered from an increase in tobacco tax should go towards tobacco control programmes.

"The level of funding going into this huge health problem is abysmal. More money is needed for public education and for cessation."

Manufactured cigarette sales before and after the Budgets of 1991, 1998 and 2000 (using data from supermarket checkouts). From *Tobacco Tax - The New Zealand Experience*.



The above graph clearly shows the large drop in the sales of cigarettes after tobacco tax increases in New Zealand in 1991, 1998 and 2000.

For further information:

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