

SMOKEFREE COALITION TAKES BAT TO COMMERCE COMMISSION

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The Smokefree Coalition has lodged a complaint about British American Tobacco New Zealand (BAT) with the Commerce Commission. The complaint, made under the Fair Trading Act 1986, alleges that BAT has made misleading statements about second-hand smoke, and about light and mild cigarettes.

The complaint to the Commerce Commission is supported by many key health groups including the Cancer Society, Asthma and Respiratory Foundation, National Heart Foundation, Te Reo Marama (Māori Smokefree Coalition), Stroke Foundation, Public Health Association and Quit Group. It also has the support of the Consumers Institute and a number of leading academics.

Smokefree Coalition Director Mark Peck says, contrary to BAT's website, second-hand smoke is extremely harmful, and has been shown to cause chronic disease, such as lung cancer, cardiovascular disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

"Only last month, the US Surgeon General issued a report¹ that said second-hand smoke caused disease and premature death in children and adults who do not smoke. This report confirmed that second-hand smoke caused respiratory illness, coronary heart disease and lung cancer, and that there is no risk-free level of exposure.

"How BAT can continue to understate the harm caused by breathing in other people's tobacco smoke in the face of such strong evidence is beyond me."

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2006.

“There is a strong feeling among health groups and others that the tobacco industry has been allowed to get away with lies and deception for far too long.

“We have legislation in this country that forbids traders from misleading the public about the nature of their products. Let’s use it. The Fair Trading Act is designed to protect people from deceit or unfair treatment.”

He says the second part of the complaint – about light and mild cigarettes – relates to the deliberate misrepresentation that these products have health benefits over what are known as regular or “higher yield” tobacco products.

“We believe such labelling is in breach of the Fair Trading Act as it designed to cause the public “to believe what is false,” and to “mislead as to a matter of fact”.

For further information about the Commerce Commission complaint and the harm caused by second-hand smoke, see the Smokefree Coalition’s website: www.sfc.org.nz.

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For more information

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