

**WITHHOLD FUNDING FOR SMOKING SCENES
– SMOKEFREE COALITION
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The Smokefree Coalition is calling on the New Zealand Film Commission and New Zealand On Air to withhold funding from films, television programmes and music videos that overstate or glamorise smoking.

Coalition Director Mark Peck says there is building evidence that smoking imagery encourages positive attitudes about smoking, and makes it appear to be a 'normal' behaviour, which in turn makes teens more likely to start smoking.

"We're particularly concerned about films, television programmes and music videos that deliberately and unnecessarily include smoking and show it as glamorous, sexy and common practice.

"Depictions of smoking are a major factor in children trying tobacco. If they get hooked, they risk severe health problems and shortened lifespan.

"We believe the New Zealand Film Commission and New Zealand On Air should withhold funding from films that feature gratuitous smoking; and include a smokefree clause in their funding agreements."

He said an analysis of the 10 highest-grossing films shown in New Zealand in 2003 found that seven contained at least one tobacco reference, with an average of more than five references per film. The typical smoker was a European adult male and the smoking was most often positive, associated with suaveness, friendship and social inclusion.

"Many top-rating films and television programmes are made overseas. It is of great concern therefore that new research out of the United States found that 60 percent of last year's top films depicted smoking, with more than 15 cigarette-related scenes an hour. Films portray smoking more heavily now than in the 1950s – a time when far more people smoked.

"Smokefree groups overseas are advocating for changes to film classifications and funding to reduce the smoking shown; in the meantime, New Zealand needs to clean up its own backyard."

For more information

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