

MEDIA RELEASE – 24 June 2007
Smokefree Coalition

Tobacco control leaders to set future agenda

The country's tobacco control leaders are meeting in Auckland this week to consider the future direction of tobacco control in New Zealand.

Those attending the invitation-only meeting on 25-26 June will include a number of tobacco control experts such as: Dr Tony Blakely, Dr Richard Edwards, Professor Alistair Woodward, Dr Marewa Glover, Dr Chris Bullen and Professor Julian Crane. Representatives from non-government organisations and other interested parties will also attend.

Under discussion will be a report commissioned by the Smokefree Coalition and Action on Smoking and health (ASH) into potential approaches to minimising harm in New Zealand from tobacco and nicotine products over the next five years.

The report, completed in January by Gravitas Research and Strategy Limited, reviewed national and international literature on tobacco control. The writers also consulted local and overseas experts about models of regulation that could be used here.

The meeting will seek to find a consensus on the report's findings and identify an agreed way forward.

Smokefree Coalition Director, Mark Peck, says, "If we are serious about making inroads into smoking prevalence and initiation, then we need to identify and work towards the models that are most likely to discourage smoking as normal behaviour.

"While we are all working toward this same goal, some of us are focussing on different parts of the agenda than others. That's not necessarily a bad thing, as a number of diverse initiatives are underway, but this will be a timely opportunity to identify and develop shared goals and strategies."

He says there is widespread agreement on issues such as banning misleading 'light' and 'mild' descriptors, and removing tobacco displays, but that calls to completely ban the sale of tobacco products, and the benefits of smokeless products such as Swedish snus, are less clear cut matters.

Mr Peck says the priority on the second day will be to draft a statement of agreement and intent which will be released to the media.

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