

## **Media Release**

### **Smokefree Coalition**

24 September 2008

#### **Tobacco industry warned about use of 'light' and 'mild' on packets**

The Commerce Commission has warned tobacco companies that the use of 'light' and 'mild' descriptors on tobacco packaging risks breaching the Fair Trading Act.

A complaint to the Commerce Commission was lodged by the Smokefree Coalition, supported by key health groups, in July 2006.

Smokefree Coalition Chair Jane Patterson says while it is disappointing tobacco companies British American Tobacco (NZ) Ltd, Imperial Tobacco Co of NZ Ltd and Philip Morris (NZ) Ltd have only received a warning, the decision shows once again the lengths tobacco companies will go to, to make a profit.

"The tobacco industry has a long history of lying. In this latest example, they are misleading smokers by suggesting 'light' and 'mild' cigarettes have health benefits over regular or higher yield tobacco products.

"As the Commerce Commission decision points out, 'light' and 'mild' tobacco is likely to be just as deadly as regular tobacco."

Jane Patterson says smoking causes many serious diseases, and 'light' or 'mild' products are no exception.

"Since at least the early 1990s, tobacco companies have known that smokers are likely to compensate for smoking 'light' cigarettes, by inhaling more deeply, holding smoke in the lungs for longer, covering manufactured cigarette ventilation holes with the fingers or mouth, or smoking more frequently."

The Smokefree Coalition is calling for misleading descriptors, such as 'light' and 'mild' to be removed from tobacco packaging immediately.

#### **For further information:**

Jane Patterson, Chair Smokefree Coalition and Executive Director of the Asthma and Respiratory Foundation.

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