

Select Committee tobacco inquiry a truly historic event

Smokefree Coalition media release

9 December 2009

Embargoed until 12 Noon, 10 December 2009

A seminar was held in Auckland today [10 December] to help smokefree organisations make submissions to a government inquiry into the tobacco industry's impact on Māori.

The Māori Affairs Select Committee will be undertaking the inquiry, which, the Smokefree Coalition says, may go down in history as one of this century's most important events for Māori health in New Zealand.

Smokefree Coalition Director Prudence Stone said opportunities like this come once in a lifetime.

"We're talking about an industry that has deliberately made its products more highly addictive, and lied to consumers over and over again. It causes the deaths of 600 Māori and 5000 New Zealanders every year.

"This is a rare chance to pin that industry down and make it answer some very specific questions about the way it has targeted Māori in its marketing, and to ask it to account for the misery its addictive wares have caused.

"I think in future we'll look back on this inquiry as having been a truly historic event, ushering in the sunset years for the tobacco industry in New Zealand."

Ms Stone says a key aspect of the inquiry will be personal stories from past smokers, to explain to the Select Committee how they were duped into smoking by misleading advertising, and about the harms to their health and aspirations that have resulted from their addiction.

Those attending the seminar were presented with a toolkit containing guidelines and resources to help focus their submissions to the inquiry. Various experts spoke about the importance of the inquiry and how a tobacco-free New Zealand could be achieved by 2020.

"I'm here because this is a matter of life and death," said Shane Kawenata Bradbrook of Te Reo Marama, which co-hosted the event.

"If banning smoking right now isn't a realistic option, then a timeline for doing so within ten years seems a viable second best option. Making submissions to the inquiry will be an excellent start, and we want to encourage as many people to make submissions as possible."

A similar seminar will be held Wellington on Monday 14 December.

Submissions for the inquiry on the tobacco industry and the consequences of tobacco use for Māori can be written, oral or made online at www.parliament.nz.

Submissions close on 29 January 2010.

For more information contact:

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Seminar details:

Auckland: 9am to 12.45pm, 10 December, Te Hotu Manawa Māori, D72 Building, 72 Dominion Road, Mt Eden.

Wellington: 9am to 12.45pm, 14 December, Senna Room, Museum Hotel, Wellington.

Media are welcome to attend.