

Tobacco industry hypocrisy to be exposed

Smokefree Coalition media release 21 June 2010

The Smokefree Coalition says the visit to New Zealand by Jeffrey Wigand, the 'whistleblower' famous for revealing tobacco industry secrets, will help expose the hypocrisy and deceit of New Zealand's tobacco executives.

Director Dr Prudence Stone says that, like the big tobacco bosses Wigand exposed, our own tobacco executives have given staged 'official lines' to the Māori Affairs Select Committee's inquiry into the tobacco industry and the consequences of tobacco use for Māori, and been frugal with the truth.

"Industry representatives have delivered nothing but calculated responses to these hearings, reserving and withholding information about their marketing strategies, and denying any responsibility to consumers over the addiction and disease tobacco causes."

"Dr Wigand will tell the Select Committee that the unwritten policy at any tobacco company is to 'hook 'em young, and hook 'em for life.' He will give us a personal account of what it is like to work in a tobacco company."

Dr Wigand will be giving expert testimony to the Māori Affairs Select Committee on Wednesday 23 June, and is also giving a series of lectures around the country.

Ms Stone says that Committee members will prick up their ears at this unique opportunity to hear what goes on inside the industry.

Wigand received threats to the lives of his children because of his revelations and eventually had to employ bodyguards. Ms Stone says his courage and resilience are inspirational.

"We all aspire to this level of bravery, given the enemy we face. We want the government to show a similar bravery; to stand up on behalf of the New Zealand population with a vision for its freedom from tobacco by 2020.

"Tobacco tax increases, plain packaging and removing displays are all things Wigand recommends as part of an overall policy package to reduce the smoking death toll.

"It's time we stopped being distracted by industry obfuscation, and got on with the job of protecting the next generation from being duped into addiction and early death."

For more information:

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Other events in Wellington with Dr Jeffrey Wigand:

1pm today: public lecture, Otago School of Medicine, Nordmeyer Lecture theatre, Mein Street

6pm today: The Insider VIP lecture at parliament

11.45am tomorrow: Māori Affairs Select Committee Inquiry hearing presentation, Bowen House

2.30pm tomorrow: High Tea with Dr Jeffrey Wigand, Wellesley Hotel, Maginnity St.