

## Imperial Tobacco a Roger Award finalist for defending its right to kill you

**Smokefree Coalition media release, 4 April 2011**

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Imperial Tobacco NZ, New Zealand's sole manufacturer of tobacco products, has been awarded third place in the annual Roger Awards which are given to the worst transnational companies operating in New Zealand.

The placing was awarded because of the company's willingness to "schmooze politicians" for the right to kill New Zealanders for profit, and for its use of the "third party technique" which is creating a fake citizens' organisation to lobby for its product.

Smokefree Coalition Director Dr Prudence Stone, who nominated Imperial Tobacco for the Roger Awards, says the Association of Community Retailers, which supposedly represented the interests of small retailers, was funded by Imperial Tobacco deliberately to confuse politicians and the New Zealand public over the benefits of removing retail tobacco displays.

"It's disgraceful when a company lobbies against moves that will save lives and prevent young people from becoming smokers, solely to protect its own profits, and it's disingenuous to hide behind a so-called public lobby group when doing so," Dr Stone said.

"The tobacco industry is notorious for using front groups to create confusion about the health risks associated with smoking, and the 'the third party technique' is commonly used wherever corporations know that if the message came directly from them few people would believe it."

However, Dr Stone says that, despite Imperial Tobacco's efforts to influence the Māori Affairs Select Committee's inquiry into the tobacco industry last year, the government has responded with a goal for New Zealand to become an essentially smokefree nation by 2025. It is also proceeding with a bill to ban tobacco displays.

"The evidence is extremely clear that tobacco displays in dairies, supermarkets and service stations help normalise tobacco as a product and increase the likelihood of young people taking up smoking, and ex-smokers returning to the habit that will kill them.

"Coming third in the Roger Awards is a clear sign that Imperial Tobacco is no longer fooling anyone when it says restricting retail displays is an infringement upon retailers' and consumers' rights.

"New Zealanders have the right not to be lied to, and our children have the right not to be unduly influenced into a life of addiction. Tobacco is not a normal product; it is a drug that kills, and to argue otherwise is nothing short of criminal."

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