

# SMOKESCREEN

October 2006

## NEW ZEALAND LAGS BEHIND WORLD TREND

Graphic health warnings on cigarettes were introduced in Canada six years ago. The success of the Canadian warnings resulted in many other countries following their lead including many 'developing' countries. Though the New Zealand Ministry of Health is in the process of introducing graphic health warnings here, they estimate they won't be in place until February 2008. By that time Canada will have had its warnings in place for eight years! Health groups believe New Zealand needs to do more than catch up with the rest of the world; we need to provide some leadership on the issue and go a step further by making the warnings larger than proposed.

### Did You Know!!

Graphic health warnings on cigarettes were introduced in:

- Canada (2000)
- Brazil (2002)
- Singapore (2004)
- Venezuela (2004)
- European Union (2004)
- Thailand (2005)
- Uruguay (2005)
- Australia (2006)
- New Zealand...still waiting



Canada



Australia



Thailand



Brazil



Brazil

## LARGE, GRAPHIC HEALTH WARNINGS WORK - why would you take half measures?

New international research shows that smokers in countries that require large, graphic health warning labels on cigarette packs are more likely to recognise the health effects of smoking and are also more likely to be motivated to quit smoking. Nearly half of adult smokers in Canada who had seen and read the graphic warnings had attempted to quit smoking or had reduced their cigarette consumption as a result of the warnings.

**Clearly the health warnings on packaging have real impact. It's a real opportunity to help smokers save their own – and others' – lives.**

Source: Hammond, D., Fong, G.T., McDonald, P.W., Cameron, R. and Brown, K.S. (2003). Impact of the graphic Canadian warning labels on adult smoking behaviour. *Tobacco Control* 12(4): 391-395.  
 Source: Hammond, D., Fong, G.T., McNeill, A., Borland R. and Cummings, K.M., 'Effectiveness of cigarette warning labels in informing smokers about the risks of smoking: findings from the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Four Country Survey', *Tobacco Control*, 2006;15:19-25



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# Graphic Health Warnings: Calls To Quitline Skyrocket In Australia

The introduction of graphic health warnings, coupled with an associated mass media campaign has proved effective in encouraging smokers to quit. The Director of Quit Victoria, Todd Harper, says that after the introduction of pictorial health warnings, calls to Quitline nationally increased by 171% from May to August 2006 compared to 2005.

He notes, "that figure would have been higher except that tobacco companies stockpiled packs with the old warnings which delayed their appearance in shops. This meant that even four months later, in July, around half of packs in shops still carried the old warnings." The mass media campaign has added to the impact of new graphic pack warnings by increasing the believability and personal relevance of the warnings amongst smokers.

Trish Cotter (Director - Cancer Prevention), Cancer Institute NSW, Australia's national mass media cessation campaign to support graphic health warnings, Presentation, 2006 World Conference on Tobacco or Health.



## TOBACCO COMPANIES EMPLOY STALLING TACTICS TO DELAY AND WEAKEN GRAPHIC HEALTH WARNINGS

The New Zealand government must learn from overseas experiences and block attempts by the tobacco industry to delay and weaken the introduction of graphic health warnings. Just as happened in Australia, tobacco companies here in New Zealand have introduced cigarette tins with removable health warnings. These devices make an absolute mockery of the warnings and illustrate the way in which the industry tries to circumvent the law. In countries which have introduced graphic health warnings, tobacco companies have stockpiled old stock to impede the introduction of the new warnings. Health groups urge the government to take action to ensure this does not happen here.

## SMOKERS ILL-INFORMED ABOUT HEALTH EFFECTS OF SMOKING

A recent multi-country study has concluded:

- health warnings are a prominent source of health information and an effective means of communicating specific disease risks;
- more comprehensive warnings, such as the graphic warnings on Canadian packages, are associated with greater health knowledge; and,
- health knowledge was strongly associated with intentions to quit among smokers.

Source: D Hammond, G T Fong, A McNeill, R Borland and K M Cummings, 'Effectiveness of cigarette warning labels in informing smokers about the risks of smoking: findings from the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Four Country Survey', Tobacco Control, 2006;15:19-25

## TOBACCO FACTS

- Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in New Zealand.
- Smoking causes a quarter of cancer deaths in New Zealand.
- Smoking is responsible for approximately fifteen per cent of all deaths.