

# QUITCHAT

Quarterly Newsletter from The Quit Group **AUGUST 2010**

## Busy times!

From the tax increase to World Smokefree Day, it's been a busy time for everyone involved with smoking cessation. Here, we follow Paula Snowden, Chief Executive of The Quit Group, as she embarks on a momentous month.

### Wednesday 28th April

A typical day at first, but then the news becomes public – a possible tax increase will be discussed in parliament tonight. And if it's passed, the prices will go up at midnight.

If history is anything to go by, the Quitline is about to get very busy.

"The last time we saw a significant taxation increase for tobacco was back in May 2000. Overnight we saw our call volumes almost triple from 6000 to 16,000 calls per month," says Paula.

Quitline manager Tracey Lanigan prepares to bring in extra staff, and the business services team brace themselves to send out all the extra Quitcards and Quit Books which will be required.

As the tax increase is confirmed in Parliament, Paula is quickly in demand from the media, which wants to know her opinion on the tax increases.

"The tax equity between tailor made cigarettes and roll-your-own loose tobacco is the right thing to do," Paula tells them. "Smoking kills however it is inhaled and all the current price difference does is make smoking more accessible, especially for younger people and those on lower incomes.

"The tax changes will certainly provide a strong incentive to discourage new smokers, particularly our youth, from taking up the habit. And, while the increases are likely to place a short-term stress on those currently addicted to nicotine, that's what The Quit Group is here for – help when it's needed."

Paula makes it clear that The Quit Group commends anything that encourages people to think about quitting, but recognises that any significant change always presents both challenges and opportunities.

Welcome to our new look Quitchat!

This is the quarterly newsletter of The Quit Group, and we aim to keep you informed with all matters relating to smoking cessation in New Zealand.

We'll update you with the latest stories from this country and abroad, discuss the hot issues (this edition – E-cigarettes!), and give you the latest Quitline figures.

But we want to hear your thoughts too – have you got a view on what you've read? What's happening where YOU are? Let us know – and we'll put it in!

There's a lot of us working together to help New Zealanders quit smoking – this newsletter aims to give us somewhere to celebrate the successes and discuss the problems, as we all head along the bumpy road to a tobacco-free Aotearoa!

"Around seven out of ten smokers want to quit and many will tell you quitting is easy - staying quit is hard. For those who have tried before there is always a good day and a good reason to try again and the price rise may be just that reason," she adds.

### Thursday 29th April

From 6pm on Wednesday night, the phones already start ringing as people respond to the tax increase – Quitline receives double the normal number of calls that night. But it's on Thursday when the impact really hits home: advisors take 862 calls in one day,



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more than triple the total for a normal Thursday, and beating the previous record of 610.

"Quitline advisors have never spoken to this many people in one day, even going back to the days when the Quitline first opened a decade ago and nicotine replacement therapy was first subsidised," said Paula.

The majority of our callers have been thinking of quitting for some time but tell us this has given them the incentive they needed to quit. We know that the majority of smokers would like to give up and are just waiting for the right time. Clearly, for many that time is now. The price of tobacco may have gone up, but it's never been cheaper to quit," added Paula.

Over the next few days, call rates remained at around triple the average, then gradually levelled out at around double. At the same time, the Quit Group's website, where people can order NRT online, was also breaking records, with 400 people registering on the 29th.

### Wednesday 19th May

Along with most other parts of the sector, today is The Quit Group's turn to present to the Maori Affairs Select Committee investigation into the tobacco industry. Paula Snowden presents the submission, aided by medical advisor and NRT expert Dr Peter Martin, and Quitline Team Leader Willie Unuka.

"There's been an attitude shift in this country over the last few years. People are no longer willing to tolerate a product that kills Kiwis by the thousands," said Paula.

"New Zealanders are not fooled by arguments against controls when they know those controls are designed to save lives, promote health and keep whanau together. The work of this committee is perfectly timed to put an end to this – to get tobacco out of sight and out of mind, and to offer support to smokers who want to rid themselves of this horrendous addiction."

It's not an easy ride for Paula – some of the panel are sceptical about the success rate of cessation services like Quitline. Paula highlights the fact that Quitline is five times more successful than cold turkey when it comes to quitting (see panel on this page), and also presents conclusive evidence showing the return on investment given by the service.

### Monday 31st May

It's World Smokefree Day! Events are taking place around the country, and it's another busy day at Quitline – Monday's are always the busiest part of the week. A lot of media interest has been generated too, some of it by the media releases organised by HSC/The Quit Group which could be localised – a great example of the sector all pulling together.

"Smoking is misleadingly, and deliberately, portrayed as a personal choice, a statement of freedom. But the sad irony is its very nature is to remove choice and rob people of freedom and replace it with an addiction that kills one in every two smokers," said Paula.

**Want to quit smoking?**

The Quitline is a free telephone support line for people wanting to quit smoking. Callers can:

- receive a Quit Pack, containing information and practical strategies for quitting
- talk to a Quit Advisor for one-on-one quit support
- receive Quit Cards for subsidised nicotine patches, gum or lozenges.

**What happens when I call?**

When you dial 0800 778 778 you'll be given several choices. You can choose to speak to a Quit Advisor. To give you the best possible guidance the Quitline advisor will want to know more about you.

- 1. Personal details and smoking history**  
The Quitline advisor will want some personal information, such as name and age, and will ask you about your smoking habits like:
  - How many cigarettes you smoke each day
  - What type of tobacco you use (i.e. roll your own, instant, cigars etc)
  - How soon in the morning after you wake before you take your first puff.
- 2. Health-related information:**  
You'll also be asked some health-related questions including:
  - Do you have a heart condition?
  - Are you taking any medication?
  - Are you pregnant?
  - Are you diabetic?
  - Do you weigh under 45kg (7 stone)?
 Please note - if there are times when the Quitline may still be unable to help, you please still call us.
- 3. Making a Quit Plan and a Quit Date**  
The Quitline advisor will work with you to create a quit smoking plan that works for you. The advisor will help you understand the addiction to nicotine, help you identify the reasons why you smoke and come up with ways to cope. The Quitline advisor will tailor ideas to show you how to cope with cravings and help you understand what's going to happen on your stop smoking. While they address all these things they will look at helping you set a date to stop smoking - your Quit Date.
- 4. Sending you a Quit Pack**  
In the mail you will receive a Quit Pack containing supportive information as well as your Quit Cards. Quit Cards can be taken to your local pharmacy and used to get subsidised nicotine patches, gum and lozenges.
- 5. Ongoing contact**  
You can call the Quitline at anytime for ongoing support and advice. From time to time a Quitline advisor may call you to see how you are getting on.
- 6. Web services**  
On our website, [www.quit.org.nz](http://www.quit.org.nz), you can:
  - Order nicotine replacement products - gum, patches and lozenges
  - Use our online calculator to work out how much you are saving from stopping quit
  - Become a member of our online community.

**Call the Quitline**  
0800 778 778  
[www.quit.org.nz](http://www.quit.org.nz)

### Quitline - Five times as successful?

Some people are dubious that smoking cessation services like Quitline are effective. It's true to say that cessation services alone won't have the drastic impact on prevalence that is required to reach a tobacco-free Aotearoa – environmental changes, financial incentives and preventing more young people taking up the habit are all vital. But if people want to quit, we need to be as effective as possible. In an evaluation of the Quitline published last year, the success of the service was measured at 21% (using a measure called 'Seven Day Point Prevalence - intention-to-treat.' This measures the number of people who hadn't smoked in the seven days preceding their six-month interview, and treats people unavailable for interview as smokers. Although this produces the most conservative quit rates it is the most internationally recognised way of measuring quitting outcomes. If the results were taken only from those people actually interviewed, they would be around 10% higher).

This rate compares to the often-quoted success rate of 'cold turkey', which is 4%. Thus, Quitline is five times as successful as this. So while neither rate is particularly high, these figures show how hard it actually is to quit smoking, and shows how effective a combination of advice and NRT can be.

## The Hot Topic

On this page we'll attempt to dissect some of the issues around smoking and cessation that are causing us all a few sleepless nights! This time:

### E Cigarettes

What are they?

A battery-powered device that provides inhaled doses of nicotine by way of a vaporized solution. In addition to purported nicotine delivery, this vapour also provides a flavour and physical sensation similar to that of inhaled tobacco smoke, while no smoke or combustion is actually involved in its operation. (Wikipedia)

What's 'good' about them?

- The lack of the poisons and chemicals that come with a 'normal' cigarette
- For some smokers, it's a quick and easy way to get the nicotine hit while escaping from tobacco
- You don't have to stick them on your arm or suck them – they act just like a cigarette
- Used long-term, they are much cheaper than cigarettes

So what's the problem?

- There's not enough research as yet to prove that they are either safe, or effective in helping smokers quit
- Successful quitting is based on targeting the three parts of the smoking addiction – the chemical, the habits and the emotions. While these products target the chemical (nicotine), they don't deal with the other two parts, and potentially reinforce the habit.
- Visually they resemble real cigarettes, so rather than de-normalising smoking, which we need to do for the benefit of our youth, they actually are role-modelling the wrong behaviour.



### Expert opinion

Dr Peter Martin, Medical Advisor to The Quit Group:

"Removing the chemicals is a great first step – it's immediately safer - but the habit of sucking on a cigarette is still there. That's why we encourage people to use the patches, gum or lozenges – they'll take the edge off your craving while you can focus on building new habits. Continuing to stick a cigarette in your mouth possibly isn't the best way to help you with that.

"E-cigarettes are certainly an interesting idea. At the end of the day though,

our aim isn't to help people become addicted safely, it's for them not to be addicted at all. We are concerned e-cigarettes may reinforce this habit but we look forward to the outcomes of further research.

"In the meantime, we'd be more than happy to provide advice to any smokers out there with questions about the best option to quit."

Your thoughts?

If you have an opinion on this topic, contact us!

## Advertising and the korowai – did we get it wrong?

A complaint was recently made about a television advert produced by The Quit Group which showed a smoker discussing her addiction while working on the korowai (traditional Māori weaving).

The complaint alleged that the advert included a sacred activity with a non-sacred activity (smoking), saying: “The Korowai is a Tapu (sacred) garment, the use of the Korowai in any advertisement that causes controversy, or promotes an idea, or ideology, or product, demeans & devalues the power of the Korowai”.

The advert was part of a series featuring Angela Wallace, a real-life smoker who allowed us to film her quitting journey. Much of her story featured the impacts of smoking on her whanau, and this particular section was intended to highlight the dilemma she faced when being involved in traditional practices.

Once the Advertising Standards Authority advised us of the complaint we discussed the matter with the complainant. We explained that this part of Angela’s story was her recognition that smoking and the tikanga of her family don’t go together and she’d be more freely able to participate in these practices as a non-smoker.

Angela herself was upset about the complaint, and had actually said on camera – though it wasn’t included in the advert, “I know I can’t do this mahi (work) when I smoke”. In her words:

“The whole point of the korowai-making ad where Susan and I discussed the need for me to stop smoking, [was to] make the point about not being able to smoke around sacred cultural practices such as weaving. It wasn’t advertising anything or any product, it was advertising life.

“I apologise to anyone who finds the ad offensive, however the ads were not scripted or staged in any way. My sister and I were having a genuine conversation while working on the korowai for our hapū Kāti Mahaki. While a sacred process, I am a weaver, it is an important part of who I am and one of the reasons why I decided to quit smoking, and I’m proud to advertise for life for us and our future generations.

“Specifically, that the ads represent my journey in giving up smoking and acknowledges that I am able to better participate in what [the complainant] refers to as sacred practices, which to me are normal tikaka Māori as a non-smoker.

“As weavers we know not to smoke, eat, or drink around our fibres and weaving...the korowai doesn’t promote anything, my sister and I do. The korowai doesn’t have power, it adorns the wearer.”

The advert had finished running by the time the complaint was made, and The Quit Group has decided not to show it again. We would be interested in any views on this matter:

Were we wrong to air this advert? Or was it right to highlight an important issue? We wanted to highlight the way smoking prevents us from sharing in the fullness of our lives. What other issues do you feel would be most useful to highlight? Let us know your thoughts.



# Does quitting smoking lead to weight gain?

At Quitline we commonly talk to people, especially women, who want to quit smoking but are worried about gaining weight. But is there really a link between smoking and weight-gain, or is it an urban myth?

## What's the story?

Smoking has been proven to suppress one's appetite - many smokers experience less of a desire to eat. Add to that the way smoking impairs our sense of taste and smell, and food just isn't the same experience for smokers - they physically aren't able to derive the same pleasure from the taste of food as non-smokers are. So there is less desire to eat, because of the appetite suppression, and less pleasure in the experience.

Tragically, this fact isn't at all lost on the tobacco companies who use the "slimming" appeal to market their products directly to female audiences and many women have taken up smoking in the belief that it will help them lose weight and stay trim.

This is quite an important distinction - smoking does not help us lose weight. It simply suppresses our desire to eat and the pleasure we experience when we do. This certainly has the effect of helping us avoid gaining any weight, but it can also lead us to starve our bodies of nutrients.

Finally, there is some evidence that suggests smoking speeds up our metabolism, increasing both our heart rate and the rate at which we burn energy and process food. Heightened metabolism can put extra strain on our bodies over time but it does also have the effect of helping keep our weight down.

## What happens when we quit?

When we give up smoking our appetite returns and the food tastes good - really good! Smokers often comment that they can't believe how different their food tastes once they give up. So our desire to eat returns and it becomes a much more rewarding experience.

The other most significant factor is that smokers are encouraged to find substitutes for old habits. They are used to having coffee and a cigarette, now we have coffee and...a muffin? Similarly they're so used to regularly putting something in their mouths...without cigarettes, food is the next natural choice. In addition, cigarettes contain sweeteners designed to taste good - so anyone quitting will be looking to replace that sweet taste.

Another risk area can be those who are prone to depression. There is some evidence of a link between quitting smoking and clinical depression, which can lead to comfort eating. If a smoker has experienced depression previously and is preparing to quit smoking, they should discuss this with their GP as weight gain is reduced when clinical depression is treated.

Finally, when a smoker quits their metabolism returns to normal levels and this can lead to some weight gain - however, the effect of this is slight, and has less effect than any of the other factors.



## So what's the best course of action for a smoker?

- Getting a healthy body back is the main thing - so the first thing to do is quit. Don't be put off. But be aware that there is a genuine link between quitting and gaining weight.
- Your metabolism may change slightly as it returns to normal - this is good (your heart will thank you for it!) and the effects of this on weight gain will be slight.
- Expect your appetite to return, you will enjoy food more and your body will want it more regularly. If you're expecting this in advance then you can plan your food choices - unhealthy snacks, 'treats' and takeaways are most commonly spontaneous. Plan some healthy choices in advance - it will make a huge difference.
- And stay active - it burns fat and releases endorphins which will promote a positive state of mind as well.

Medical facts provided by Dr Peter Martin, medical advisor to The Quit Group.

## Working issues

### The Quit Group to assist PHOs with ABCs

From 1 July, The Quit Group began offering a 'referral service' to PHOs. From that date PHOs were expected by the MoH to measure their success on the B and C parts of the ABC system. The Quit Group's service will be an integrated, automated system allowing health professionals to easily refer smokers to us, and for us to be able to either help them or refer them to other cessation providers.

Details of the service:

- Free to PHOs
- Referrals would be made via an electronic form which would be designed to fit into the current Medtech 'Practice Management Systems' used by GPs and nurses
- Quitline would attempt to call all referred clients within 48 hours of the referral
- Those unable to be contacted would receive follow up calls or a letter within a week
- Clients would be offered a choice of cessation services including face to face

Paula Snowden, Chief Executive of The Quit Group, said: "It's a very positive step that we'll be able to work alongside the PHOs in helping more people quit smoking. Thousands upon thousands of people are in contact with PHOs every day. Among those are many smokers, so if we can offer support and make it as easy as possible for them to quit successfully, we can really have a major impact on the smoking statistics in this country – and make a huge difference to people's lives."

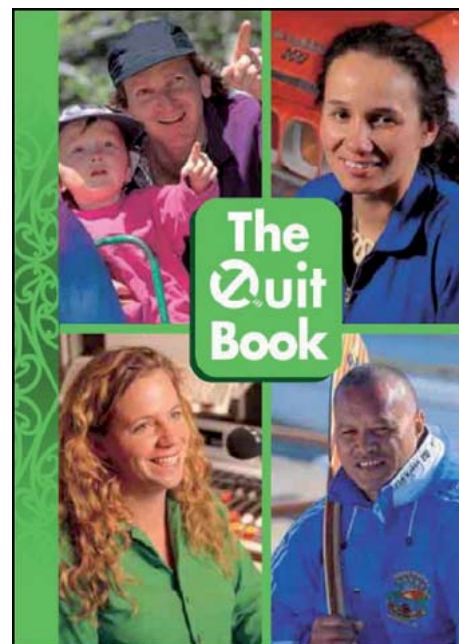
### The Quit Book and other resources

A new, improved Quit Book will be available soon after a thorough review of its effectiveness. While the book has always rated very highly among smokers throughout its 10 year history, it was felt that it could be improved to make it even better. Improvements include:

- Ensuring the book helps smokers through their whole journey – from deciding to quit through to potential relapse and back to quitting
- More factual information on tricky issues such as NRT and pregnancy
- Less text, easier-to-understand language
- Up-to-date, easy-to-use, modern design

Alongside the Quit Book update, we have also reviewed all of our information leaflets and resources. Other changes will include:

- A handy wallet card which will include the info a smoker will need when they decide to quit
- A comprehensive range of Factsheets available on our website offering detailed information on subjects including smoking and drinking, diabetes, pregnancy etc
- More information specifically for health professionals, eg for smokers preparing for surgery. We can develop this type of resource on request.
- A fully Te Reo quitting booklet, plus increased translations of resources where required, eg in Samoan, Tongan, Asian languages
- A new Call the Quitline poster, and an update of teen resource Break Free.





### Quit Stats!

Our regular update on how many people are registering with us.

During the March – May quarter 36% more quit attempts were registered than the same period in 2009. May was a very high volume month following the tobacco tax increase, with almost twice the average number of quit attempts being recorded.

Half of the quit attempts were made using web services, 45% were through Quitline, and 5% were through Txt2Quit. Of all clients registering quit attempts, 20% identified as Māori, and 5% identified as a Pacific ethnicity.

### Samoan Language Service

From July 1st, Samoan smokers have been able to receive the full Quitline service in their native language. Five Samoan-speaking advisors are available on the phones and can provide the full service – registration, making a Quit Plan, discussing the nature of the client’s addiction, offering support and ordering nicotine replacement when required – in Samoan.

Samoans make up the biggest proportion of Pacific people in New Zealand, and make up almost half (47%) of Pacific people calling the Quitline. Samoans have a smoking rate of around one in four, compared to a national average of one in five.

Quitline Advisor Senior Moli said the service was important as there were a significant number of Samoan smokers

who were uncomfortable conversing in English, and therefore wouldn’t otherwise be able to use the Quitline service.

“We’ll be able to greet people not just in their own language but also in the Samoan way – we use a lot of humour when we talk, so that can break the ice and make people feel more comfortable. If you can make that connection, then people are more likely to take on board the things you are talking about around their smoking, which goes a long way to making their quit attempt more successful.”

If the service is shown through research to be successful in helping more Samoans both use the service, and quit successfully, then it may be extended to the Cook Island and Tongan languages.

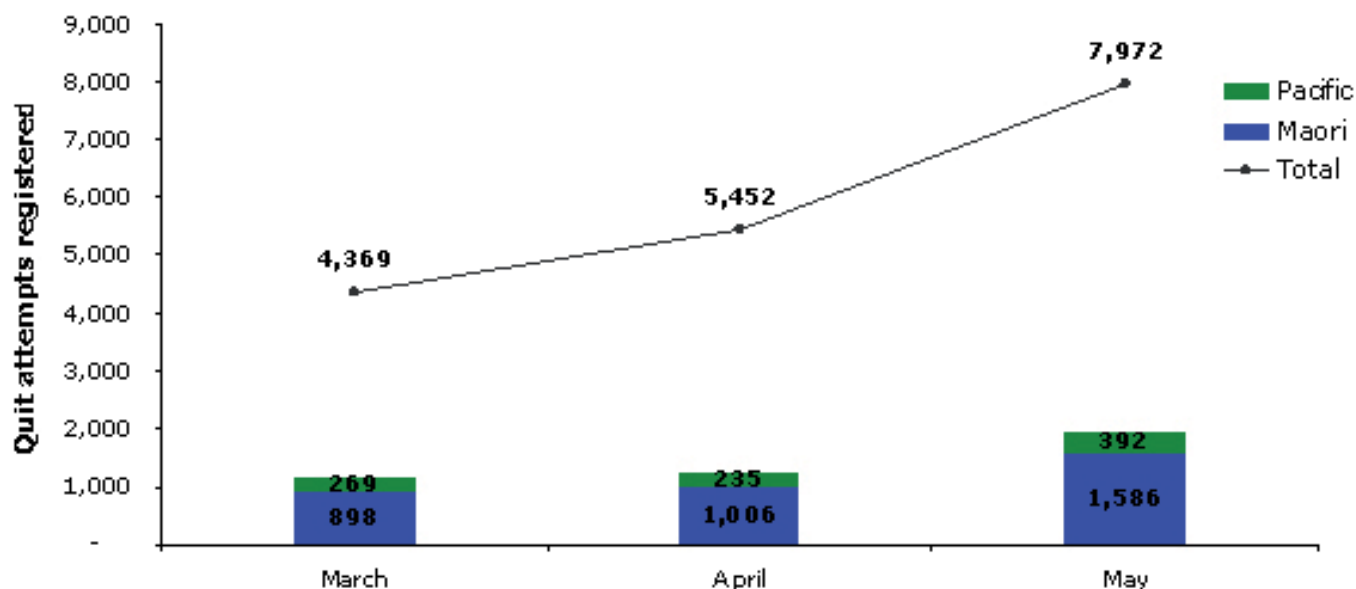


Figure 1. Quit service volumes March to May 2010

# Quitters Stories/ Tales from the Blogs



If we ever need reminding what smokers go through when they quit, The Quit Group's blogs at [www.quit.org.nz](http://www.quit.org.nz) are an invaluable resource. Here's a glance at what's being said right now...



## When is the time ever right? | Posted by Woes

I felt very odd all day yesterday, cotton wool brain and didn't achieve very much all day. I had a meeting at work and someone asked me if the time was right to give up now due to the stresses recently and because I also have battled with the drinking demon since I was 16. When is the time ever right? My life is going really well right now and in the past I have used that as an excuse not to give up or if I had (and I had many attempts) to start again. My experience, is there is always something that happens and it is how to get through that without a smoke and if its anything like giving up the booze, then I know I will feel stronger, as time goes by. This is the first time I have done so well for a long time! I found I was triggered of by hanging out the washing yesterday, by walking around the garden and waiting for buses. These are times I have always smoked. This morning I woke up with a feeling for wanting a smoke that came and went in a wave, so I guess this is the habit stuff they talk about. Will now read at the bus stop and I guess suck on a lozenge and chew gum for the other two, speaking of which I had better go and put on a patch and have a chew, now that's better than the other mornings!!!

## Justine... | Posted by t0mailz

Everybody has been in a position of questioning themselves of what if i fail? I have definitely. I have 6 kids and that same thought went through my head, they would be disappointed in me if I failed. The approach I took to that possible situation was I told my kids it is a very addictive substance and takes a lot of will power and support (be it family or replacements or both) to overcome, so please support me through this, it will pass...eventually. I had told my kids if I failed I would try again. So far I haven't it is my 51st day of being smokefree. It has been hard (very) but it does get better. I have to constantly retrain my brain that my physical being no longer smokes and the kids actually forget that I use to smoke. You will do it when you are ready. The blogs on here are one of the best tools you can use to help you through your new way of life because there is a blog for every situation you can think off. By the time you finish reading them you won't feel like a smoke. Good luck on your journey I wish you all the best.

## The ooops syndrome..... | Posted by smokefreediane

I am two weeks off smoking.....Yay!

Tonight at work (night shift) I have been feeling dizzy, have a slight tingle in the back of my throat and go croaky off and on, bumping into things, hitting my head on stuff and having trouble adding the simplest of sums.....what the hell is going on?? At times I seem to be walking around like a fart in a trance, very strange feeling.....and forgetting things.

Has anyone else out there in smokefree land had any of this going on??? I would love to hear from you?? It's scary.....

**We'd love to hear your views on Quitchat – please email us on [Quitchat@quit.org.nz](mailto:Quitchat@quit.org.nz)**

**The Quit Group**  
**TE ROOPU ME MUTU**

QuitChat is published quarterly by The Quit Group. The Quit Group is a charitable trust formed by the Cancer Society of New Zealand, the Health Sponsorship Council and Te Hotu Manawa Māori to carry out programmes to reduce smoking in New Zealand.

Tel: 04 460 9899 Fax: 04 470 7632

Email: [quit@quit.org.nz](mailto:quit@quit.org.nz)

Internet: [www.quit.org.nz](http://www.quit.org.nz)