

Tuesday 27th April 2010

As two thirds of Kiwis support an end to tobacco sales, Quitline urges MPs: "Keep your foot on the throttle!"

Experts from the smoking cessation Quitline, which has seen call numbers rocket after the recent tobacco tax increase, will today be asking politicians to keep up the pressure on the tobacco industry.

Paula Snowden, Chief Executive of The Quit Group, will head a team presenting to the Maori Affairs Select Committee which is investigating the tobacco industry. In light of new figures from the Smokefree Coalition showing that 64% of New Zealanders completely support an end to tobacco sales by 2020, Paula said:

"We know that smokers want to quit. They've been coming to us in record numbers since the prices went up. But we need to provide the incentives so smokers keep choosing to beat the addiction – such as tax increases or banning tobacco displays in dairies – and we then we need to support them to quit and stay quit."

In the week following the tax increase on April 28th, The Quit Group registered 3040 new smokers through its services, compared to an average weekly figure of 1062 before the increase – almost triple. Of these, 625 were Maori.

"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."

Ends

1. For more information, call Carl Billington on 029 770 0317