

Quitline takes record number of calls as tobacco tax increase hits home

The Quitline, which has been supporting smokers to quit since 1999, has talked to more people in one day than ever following last night's increase in tobacco tax.

Quitline advisors expect to have spoken to more than 750 people by the end of the day. This blitzes the previous record of 610 recorded in 2008 when a hard-hitting advertising campaign was launched. It's nearly triple the expected number of calls for today.

"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 Chief Executive of The Quit Group, Paula Snowden.

"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."

Paula points out that it takes on average 6 attempts to break the habit for good. "And for those who've 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.

Many people are asking for the subsidised patches, gum and lozenges which can help them deal with cravings. For just \$3, callers receive an eight week supply.

"The price of tobacco may have gone up, but it's never been cheaper to quit," said Paula.

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1. Contact Carl Billington (029 770 0317) for comment/interviews. Interviews are available in Te Reo on request.
2. The Quitline number is 0800 778 778
3. Additional notes to reporter:

- Tobacco smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in New Zealand
- According to New Zealand studies, one in five smokers is thinking about quitting or trying to quit at any given point in time and 70% of smokers have tried to quit in the last 12 months.
- There are approximately 650,000 smokers in New Zealand