

Petition: Officers' Response

Title: Prohibit the Smoking of Cigarettes in Wellington Central City.

Primary Petitioner: Hiroshi Yoshikawa
Total Signatures: 28 (via ePetition)

Presented by: Hiroshi Yoshikawa
Contact officer: Nigel Taptiklis
Director responsible: Wendy Walker

Officers' recommendation:

Officers recommend that the Committee:

1. *Receive the petition.*
2. *Note that health promoters recommend an educational approach for reducing smoking in outdoor areas rather than a ban.*

Background:

The ePetition "Prohibit smoking of cigarettes within Wellington Central City except for approved areas provided for smoking members of the public" was initiated by Hiroshi Yoshikawa on 18 January 2012 and closed on 18 February 2012.

The purpose of the petition is to request that Wellington City Council prohibit smoking of cigarettes within Wellington's Central City, except for approved areas provided for smoking members of the public.

The petition was open to all members of the public with internet access to the Council's website. It received 28 signatures.

Officers' response:

Central Government is responsible for and takes the lead on smoking related issues, and recently declared cross-party support for a smoke-free New Zealand by 2025. The Smoke-free Environments Act was introduced in 1990, and 22 years later, a shift away from smoking is well underway in New Zealand. However, smoking still significantly impacts the lives and health of many New Zealanders; for example, 1/3 of New Zealand children are born into a smoking household¹.

Prohibiting smoking in the city centre is not recommended as a ban would be very difficult to enforce. Smoking is a legal activity and it is questionable whether a ban would be able to withstand a legal challenge. A 'ban' would also be inconsistent with the educational approach recommended by health promoters.

Organisations such as the Cancer Society and Regional Public Health are currently promoting Smoke-free Outdoor Areas (SFOAs) in support of the Government's 2025 goal. The primary objective of SFOAs is to restrict smoking in the presence of children to reduce the likelihood of children becoming smokers².

From a public health perspective, SFOAs are part of a wider contribution to making smoking less desirable, acceptable and visible. Implementing SFOA's requires a gradual, educational approach. This means that SFOA policies are not 'smoking bans'; voluntary compliance is achieved by encouraging smokers not to light up with signs and social pressure (i.e. members of the public point out the signs to anyone seen smoking). Councils usually start with smoke-free playgrounds, parks and reserves, and half of New Zealand's district and city councils, including Upper Hutt (since 2006), Kapiti (2008), Porirua (2010), and Lower Hutt (2011) now have smoke-free play spaces.

Extending Smoke-free Outdoor Areas

Wellington City Council has designated Newtown Park, Rugby League Park and the National Hockey Stadium 'smoke-free', and 'no smoking' is one of the rules for all of Council's artificial sports fields. In response to queries from residents and property damage from smoking, Council is making communal

¹ Morton, S.M.B., et al. 2012. Growing Up in New Zealand: A longitudinal study of New Zealand children and their families. Report 2: Now we are born. Auckland: Growing Up in New Zealand.

² Thomson, G., et al. 2008. Head to Head: Should smoking in outside public spaces be banned? Yes. British Medical Journal 2008, 337: a2806.

areas of its apartment complexes smoke-free, including children's play areas, corridors and stairwells; and has decided to make Regent Park the first complex where the units will be smoke-free. Council will continue its current case-by-case approach to designating smoke-free areas as the cost of a broader approach such as making all playgrounds, and/or sports fields and/or reserves smoke-free is unbudgeted.

Other local authorities have initiated a broad smoke-free approach. Upper Hutt City Council's experience is the smoke-free status of their parks, reserves and sports fields is widely accepted but signs are still required as a reminder. Upper Hutt's signs cost \$90 each (including installation), and they also use a 'smokefree' sign supplied free by Regional Public Health, which costs \$25 to install. Hutt City Council prefers to use its own signs only, and apply a case-by-case 'minimal but adequate' approach to signage to avoid visual pollution. At some sites, Hutt City use only 'smokefree' stickers and no signs. These stickers are available free from Regional Public Health.

An indication of the costs of signs for Wellington City Council's playgrounds, one sign for each of Council's 104 playgrounds could cost \$9360 (including installation, based on Upper Hutt's sign). However where stickers are sufficient, signage costs will be negligible.