
REPORT 4
(1215/52/IM)

**SMOKEFREE PLAYGROUNDS, PARKS AND
RESERVES**

1. Purpose of Report

This report responds to a recommendation moved by the Strategy and Policy Committee, for officers to investigate options for smoke-free playgrounds, parks and reserves, following the presentation of an e-petition to ban smoking in the central city.

2. Executive Summary

The Government has a goal for New Zealand to be tobacco-free by 2025. Smoking is the single greatest preventable cause of death in New Zealand¹.

In line with the Government's goal, Wellington Regional Public Health is making submissions on all of the regions Long Term Plans recommending the extension of smoke-free outdoor areas.

The objective of this approach is to encourage smokers not to smoke in the presence of children². There is a strong link between the extent that children and young people observe smoking, and the likelihood that they will become smokers³. The average age for people to start smoking in New Zealand is 14 years.⁴

Public health authorities recommend using education rather than regulation, an approach that has already been adopted by many councils in New Zealand. The role of councils is to make clear the reasons and expectations for the smoke-free areas, rather than 'police' them. 'Enforcement' is best achieved with polite reminders, especially from peers.

¹ Ministry of Health (2008), Tobacco control and smoking: Tobacco control in New Zealand – deaths from smoking.

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

³ Tyas SL, Pederson LL: Psychosocial factors related to adolescent smoking: a critical review of the literature. Tob Control 1998, 7:409-20.

⁴ Ministry of Health. 2006. Tobacco Trends 2006: Monitoring tobacco use in New Zealand. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

Three options have been explored, a bylaw, the current case-by-case approach, and making all playgrounds and sports parks smoke-free. A bylaw banning smoking is not recommended as it would be expensive and difficult to enforce. Currently, a number of sports parks are smoke-free, however the effectiveness of this initiative will be less effective than if all sports parks were smoke-free.

Officers recommend the Council extends smoke-free signage to all playgrounds and sports parks with a staged approach. A staged approach will provide the following advantages:

- targeted, cost efficient smoke-free messaging
- minimum cost signage and communications options can be tested (eg stickers may be sufficient signage for additional parks, with more permanent signage installed when signs are replaced)
- the Council can assess the effectiveness of the initial entrance sign changes before it decides on the most appropriate and cost-effective way to alter signs in the rest of its parks.

Parks and Gardens will require a budget for promotion and signs, either as new funding or from reprioritising existing budgets to implement this initiative. As an indication of cost, \$20,000 (\$15,000 capital plus \$5,000 operational) will be sufficient to cover initial design costs, and promotion and signs to implement the staged approach for the first year.

3. Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Strategy and Policy Committee:

1. *Receive the information.*
2. *Note the Government's goal for New Zealand to be smoke-free by 2025.*
3. *Agree to make all the Council's playgrounds and sports parks smoke-free and that Parks and Gardens develop a plan to progressively implement this in line with its general business.*
4. *Agree to include \$15,000 capital expenditure plus \$5,000 operational funding for this initiative in the Long-term Plan for 2012/13 only for recommendation to the Council.*
5. *Agree to the Council taking an educational approach rather than an enforcement role.*
6. *Note that a draft communications plan has been developed, should the Council decide to make its playgrounds and sports parks smoke-free.*

4. Background

Smoking is the single greatest preventable cause of death in New Zealand¹. In July 2011, the Government announced a goal for New Zealand to be tobacco-free by 2025. Local Government is tasked with a supporting role:

“...it shall be the duty of every local authority to improve, promote, and protect public health within its district”¹

The objective of smoke-free outdoor areas is to reduce ‘role-modelling’ of smoking to children, to reduce the chances that children will become smokers². This is because there is a strong link between children and young people observing smoking, and the likelihood that they will become smokers³. The average age for people to start smoking in New Zealand is 14 years.⁴

Half of New Zealand’s district and city councils have already designated their playgrounds, parks and reserves smoke-free, and all council playgrounds within the region are smoke-free except those in Wellington. The Council has been approached on a number of occasions regarding smoke-free outdoor areas including:

- A Smoke-free Youth Ambassador addressed the Strategy and Policy Committee encouraging the Council to make its playgrounds and sports parks smoke-free (December 2011).
- An e-petition to ban smoking in the central city that received 28 signatures (February 2012)
- An e-petition, to ban on smoking along the City’s “Golden Mile” that received 672 signatures (January 2010).

The e-petition to ban smoking in the central city was presented to the Strategy and Policy Committee in April 2012. Following the presentation of this e-petition, the Committee directed officers to investigate options for smoke-free playgrounds, parks and reserves, and report back to SPC in time for any funding implications to be considered as part of the Long-term Plan deliberations.

5. Discussion

5.1 What are the Options?

Three options are explored:

- stay with the current ‘case-by-case’ approach
- create a bylaw
- expand smoke-free areas to all playgrounds and sports parks

¹ Health Act (1956) Section 23.

5.1.2 Current Smoke-free Activities

The Council already has a number of smoke-free areas and initiatives including:

- Newtown Park, Rugby League Park and the National Hockey Stadium are smoke-free.
- 'No smoking' is a rule for all artificial sports grounds, and 'smoke-free' signs have also been installed.
- Work is underway to make communal areas of Council apartment complexes smoke-free, including children's play areas, corridors and stairwells.
- The units of the new Regent Park apartment complex are smoke-free.

These examples are part of a case-by-case approach, generally implemented where 'smoke-free' is a useful compliment to other smoking related issues – eg property damage. Council could continue this approach, however the lack of consistency with regards to sports parks would limit the effectiveness and could even undermine this initiative.

5.1.1 Create a Bylaw

Cable Car lane is the only example of a smoking bylaw in New Zealand. While often referred to as a 'smoke-free street' it is in effect an enclosed space. While Councils do regulate where and when it is appropriate to use certain legal products (eg alcohol), enforcing a smoking bylaw over many open parks would be difficult and expensive and is not recommended. A smoking bylaw could also raise issues with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act.

Smokers trying to quit also need encouragement and support. Active enforcement is necessary for a bylaw to be effective and a 'smoking police' approach would not be perceived as positive or supportive.

5.1.1 Expand Smoke-free areas to all Playgrounds and Sports Parks (recommended approach)

Officers recommend the Council expands its smoke-free outdoor areas to include all playgrounds and sports parks. A consistent approach will be clearer and easier to communicate, and more effective.

The most effective and recommended 'enforcement' of smoke-free outdoor areas is clear signage, supportive messaging through the available media channels to increase community awareness, and polite and friendly reminder from peers.

Amendments to the Smoke-free Environments Act in 2003 made the grounds and sports fields of all schools in New Zealand smoke-free. Many councils have since made their playgrounds and sports parks smoke-free.

Wellington City Council has 43 sports parks, 104 playgrounds and 7 skate parks and these are the only ones which are not smoke-free within the region.

In light of regional smoke-free activities and the Government's goal for New Zealand to be smoke-free by 2025, officers recommend the Council adopt this smoke-free initiative for its playgrounds and sports parks, to be implemented through communication and education activities. A consistent regional approach would give smokers a better 'steer', and may provide opportunities for collaboration and cost savings.

5.3 Implementation of Recommended Approach

A staged approach to upgrading entrance signs is recommended to keep the cost of implementing this initiative down. In the first year, officers propose altering existing signage at the Council's most popular playgrounds and sports parks and implementing a communications strategy. The council could use as many low-cost channels as possible including reminders on our recorded cancellation line, posters, and direct approaches and reminders to sports clubs and organisations.

A staged approach will provide the following advantages:

- targeted, cost efficient smoke-free messaging
- minimum cost signage and communications options can be tested (eg stickers may be sufficient signage for additional parks, with more permanent signage installed when signs are replaced)
- the Council can assess the effectiveness of the initial entrance sign changes before it decides on the most appropriate and cost-effective way to alter signs in the rest of its parks.

To implement this recommended approach, Parks and Garden's will need \$15,000 capital expenditure plus \$5,000 operational funding to cover the initial design costs, and promotion and signs for the first year. If this level of funding were not available, this initiative could still be implemented, but the Council would not be able to achieve as much in the first year, and the implementation would be phased over a longer timeframe.

5.4 Consultation and Engagement

No consultation or engagement has been undertaken at this stage. Smoke-free playgrounds and sports parks align the Council with regional smoke-free activities that are well established and supported.

5.5 Financial Considerations

\$15,000 capital plus \$5,000 operational funding is required for the first year to implement this initiative. This would have to be new funding allocated within the Long-term Plan process, or reprioritised within existing budgets.

5.6 Climate Change Impacts and Considerations

There are no direct climate change implications.

6. Conclusion

The Council already has some smoke-free initiatives underway and officers recommend extending these to cover all playgrounds and sports parks.

Making all the Councils playgrounds and sports parks smoke-free would align our smoke-free activities regionally and nationally.

If the Council's playgrounds and sports parks are made smoke-free, a Smoke-free Parks Policy, reflecting the content of this paper will be linked in with the Open Spaces Strategy, which is currently under review.

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Supporting Information

1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome

Smoke-free playgrounds and sports parks align the Council with regional and national smoke-free activities.

2) LTP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact

The recommended approach to implementing this initiative requires an additional \$15,000 capital plus \$5,000 operational funding for Parks and Gardens in 2012/13.

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

Smoking is a significant issue for Maori and this initiative will help reduce the impact.

4) Decision-Making

No significant decisions are proposed within this report.

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

Smoke-free playgrounds and sports parks align the Council with regional smoke-free activities that are well established and supported.

b) Consultation with Maori

No changes of specific interest to Maori are proposed in this report.

6) Legal Implications

There are no specific legal implications in this report.

7) Consistency with existing policy

The recommended changes are an extension of existing smoke-free initiatives.