

# Smokefree position statement

## Purpose

The New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) is committed to a Smokefree nation. This position statement provides a clear statement of NZNO's commitment and provides members with information on working in a Smokefree workplace or environment.

## Introduction

As a professional and industrial organisation, NZNO is committed to a Smokefree nation by 2025, with the aim that future generations of Aotearoa New Zealand children will be free from exposure to tobacco and will enjoy Smokefree lives.

As health professionals, our members are well aware of the highly addictive nature of tobacco, and that it causes more deaths in New Zealand than any other drug<sup>1</sup>, and is responsible for about 5000 New Zealanders' deaths each year (4700 smokers and 300 from second-hand smoke), of which 600 are Māori<sup>2</sup>. Tobacco is the only consumer product in widespread use that directly poses such enormous health risks to users, particularly long-term users<sup>3</sup>. Māori and Pacific people are disproportionately affected, with both Māori and Pacific people more likely to smoke than other New Zealanders. It is unacceptable that statistics still show disparities in smoking rates for Māori, especially those of Māori women, who have the highest smoking rate of any ethnic group (49 percent) in New Zealand<sup>4</sup>.

## NZNO role

NZNO provides leadership and advocates for members regardless of their smoking status as health professionals who smoke or health professionals who have quit or health professionals who have never smoked. We acknowledge that some of our members are smokers and that, as health professionals, they face stigma for their addiction and experience guilt. NZNO strongly advocates for members' access to supportive programmes and measures to increase successful quitting support services and products. NZNO acknowledges that being addicted to tobacco in no way impedes

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<sup>1</sup> The Drug Foundation website. 2012. *Tobacco Drug Information*. Wellington: The Drug Foundation. Accessed 4/10/12.

<sup>2</sup> Health Sponsorship Council website. 2012. *Tobacco Control Information*. Wellington: Health Sponsorship Council.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Health website. 2012. *Proposal to introduce plain packaging of tobacco products in New Zealand: consultation document*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

<sup>4</sup> Wilson, D & Fernandez, C. 2008. *Māori women's views on smoking cessation initiatives*. Auckland: Nursing Praxis in New Zealand.

a health professional's ability or makes them less skilful or trustworthy. We encourage our members to familiarise themselves with their workplace Smokefree policies and their responsibilities as employees<sup>5,6</sup>.

NZNO is committed to policies and actions that are fair and reasonable and aim to:

- > achieve a Smokefree Aotearoa New Zealand by 2025;
- > improve the health and wellbeing of all employees;
- > improve access to free smoking cessation programmes for health professionals and others who wish to quit;
- > increase training and education in cessation programmes, and nicotine replacement therapy;
- > increase participation in public education/campaigns, or research that promotes Smokefree;
- > outline Smokefree health benefits for clients, families, whānau, and the wider community;
- > reduce inequalities in health statistics for Māori people and Pacific people; and
- > provide access to equal opportunity rights for all members regardless of their Smokefree status.

NZNO will:

- > encourage nurses to become smoke free role models; and advocates in leading routine smoking cessation ABCs (Ask about smoking status; provide Brief advice to stop smoking to all smokers, provide evidence based Cessation treatment including cessation aids such as nicotine replacement therapy) programmes; and
- > lobby the government for increased taxes on tobacco products, for plain packaging, and Smokefree legislation.

## Health professionals as advocates

The public perceive nurses as a trusted and credible workforce and expects health professionals to be positive role models for their families, whānau and communities. All health professionals are expected to have a commitment to being advocates and role models for a Smokefree lifestyle. There is strong evidence that brief advice from a health professional is highly effective at encouraging people to try and quit smoking, and to stay Smokefree<sup>7</sup>. As New Zealand's largest health workforce, nurses are able to provide effective smoking cessation interventions, and to be powerful advocates for

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<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Health website 2012. *Smokefree law*. [www.smokefreelaws.co.nz](http://www.smokefreelaws.co.nz) Accessed 9/10/12.

<sup>6</sup> Department of Labour. 2012. *Occupational Health and Safety Information on the HSE Act 1992 and 2002 amendments*. [www.osh.dol.govt.nz](http://www.osh.dol.govt.nz) accessed 9/10/12.

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Health. 2011. *Targeting smokers better to help for smokers to quit*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

tobacco free homes and communities<sup>8</sup>. Nurses have opportunities to engage with family members who smoke and offer support for them to quit, to improve their health, as well as to protect the health of their families and whānau, and to build a trusting relationship to provide follow-up support<sup>9</sup>. As health professionals, many are involved in asking clients about their smoking status as a clinical “vital sign” and providing brief advice and quit support to current smokers<sup>10</sup>.

## Information for health professionals working in smoke free workplaces

It is important that:

- > members are familiar with employers’ smoking policies as these can vary significantly from employer to employer. For example most district health boards (DHBs) are moving towards a total smoking ban at the workplace, including banning smoking on hospital grounds;
- > members are mindful that colleagues, patients and their families may not appreciate you arriving at work smelling of tobacco. Please be considerate about the effects on others of smoking in your own time. This can be detrimental to those you work with and care for;
- > health professionals do not smoke publicly while in their professional attire;
- > staff members who wish to leave their workplace to smoke do so during designated meal/tea breaks and conceal any reference to their workplace, ie identity badges should be removed and uniforms covered.

NZNO advises members to refrain from smoking at work and to discuss any problems associated with withdrawal symptoms with their manager so appropriate support can be provided. Members are also encouraged to contact Quit – Line (0800 778 778).

## Where can I find further information:

- > Smokefree nurses Aotearoa [www.smokefreenurses.org.nz](http://www.smokefreenurses.org.nz)
- > Quitline [www.quit.org.nz](http://www.quit.org.nz) or 0800 778 778
- > Aukaiti kaipaipa [www.aukatikaipaipa.co.nz](http://www.aukatikaipaipa.co.nz)
- > Smokefree Coalition [www.sfc.org.nz](http://www.sfc.org.nz)

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<sup>8</sup> Auckland University Technology. 2007. *Smoking and Nurses in New Zealand. ASH-KAN Aotearoa: assessment of smoking history, knowledge and attitudes of nurses in New Zealand*. Auckland: ASH New Zealand.

<sup>9</sup> AUT University & ASH. 2007. *Smoking and Nurses in New Zealand ASH-KAN Aotearoa: Assessment of smoking history, knowledge and attitudes of nurses in New Zealand*. Auckland: AUT University & ASH.

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Health. 2012. Health Targets 2012/13 website. [health.govt.nz](http://health.govt.nz) accessed 10/10/12.

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**Mission statement**

NZNO is committed to the representation of members and the promotion of nursing and midwifery. NZNO embraces Te Tiriti o Waitangi and works to improve the health status of all peoples of Aotearoa/ New Zealand through participation in health and social policy development.

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