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20 January 2010

Maori Affairs Select Committee

Committee Secretariat
Bowen House
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON

Re: Inquiry into the tobacco industry in Aotearoa and the consequences of tobacco use for Maori.

Kia ora,

Thank you for providing the opportunity to present my views on **Policy Solutions** and the conclusions I have reached, based on my company's research, and 26 years in tobacco health policy at national level.

I wish to highlight

- The case for phasing out commercial cigarettes by 2020.
- Findings and conclusions from my company's world leading research on cigarettes and nicotine cigarette substitutes.

Personal background. I have been involved in tobacco policy at the national level since 1984 and was principal medical officer for tobacco control in the Department of Health from 1984 to 1992 and then in the Public Health Commission 1993-95. Since then through my company Health New Zealand Ltd, I have specialised in national tobacco policy and latterly, in nicotine and tobacco products research.

The 1950 situation. From the time I smoked my first and only cigarette in 1950, until I was in a position to do something about it in 1985, cigarette smoking killed about 100,000 New Zealanders. In 1950, unbeknown to me, the medical profession of that time had read the first evidence that smoking caused lung cancer, and doctors started to give up smoking.

The 1985 situation. It was 1985 that I wrote the first Comprehensive Policy on Promotion of Non-smoking, which was presented to the Minister of Health by his Advisory Committee. The global and local tobacco industry continued

to oppose all efforts to reduce smoking, and another 100,000 New Zealanders have died prematurely from smoking since that time.

The case for phasing out commercial cigarettes by law by 2020

For the sake of Maori and non-Maori alike but particularly for Maori, the smoking deaths epidemic must be ended, and new policies are needed to achieve this, even if it takes ten years, with possibly the first five years used to get parliamentary agreement on an amendment bill, with the second five to used to implement the changes.

New Zealand's Smokefree Environments Act 1990 restricted advertising and smoking, but permits the industry to continue to sell cigarettes and smoking tobacco. The Act, in effect, successfully works like a *Tobacco Control Act*, which keeps

- Cigarette consumption steady since 2003 at 1260 per adult per year.
- Adult cigarette smoking prevalence close to 20%, declining slowly by 3 percentage points per decade.
- Cigarette deaths steady at 4000 to 5000 per year.

In 2010 the unabated continuance of this epidemic of deaths due to smoking is no longer acceptable.

What is needed now is a stronger Smokefree Environments Act to *eliminate* the sales of cigarettes and smoking tobacco and *end* the smoking and tobacco deaths epidemic. This is not prohibition on smokers, who would be permitted to grow and smoke their own tobacco.

THREE HIGHLIGHTS FROM MY COMPANY'S RESEARCH SINCE 2006

My personal and company research highlights three main findings:

1) Research on toxicity of any kind of cigarette:

Findings Commercial cigarettes cannot be made safer.¹

Conclusion As the harm per cigarette cannot be reduced, then the only way to reduce harm is to reduce number of cigarettes sold from 4 billion per year now, towards zero. This can be done if the tobacco and cigarette supply is reduced by law, and if smokers have satisfying nicotine products to switch over to.

2) Research on addictiveness of commercial cigarettes.

Findings 25% of New Zealand adolescents start becoming addicted to cigarettes after smoking their first cigarettes (some after the first cigarette).²

Conclusion Thus as long as cigarettes are available commercially parents cannot protect adolescents, even if their home is smokefree, from becoming smokers. That means smoking will continue to spread to the next generation, and cigarette deaths will never end until commercial sales end.

3) Research on nicotine cigarettes as alternatives to cigarettes

Findings Two new nicotine “cigarette” products with good safety profiles can reduce cravings. These new nicotine non-tobacco smokeless products give off mist not smoke, and simulate the act of smoking:

- the electronic nicotine cigarette, on sale overseas, and another,
- a nicotine pyruvate cigarette,³ now ready to be commercialized.

Conclusion

- Before 2015 satisfying nicotine products, with low toxicity, will be available for smokers to buy from their corner store.
- These nicotine products will give confidence to 600,000 smokers, that by experiencing such products, there is life after smoking, and it does not necessarily have to mean nicotine abstinence.
- Legislators and political parties can be confident that the Smokefree Environments Act will succeed in phasing out all sales of cigarettes and smoking tobacco, without smokers pleading they can’t live without lighting up.
- New products, allow new thinking, and could mean smokers using nicotine for longer after quitting, with less risk of relapse.

The ten year countdown. To stop transmission of the smoking habit to the next generation, requires a steady phasing out cigarette and smoking tobacco sales in the lead up to the target endpoint in 2020, using the four points advocated in a paper written by the trustees of End Smoking NZ,⁴ which has been submitted for publication shortly in the *NZ Medical Journal*. These four points briefly are:

- increase tobacco tax;
- decrease the supply of cigarettes;
- decrease nicotine content per cigarette;
- increase the supply of effective nicotine substitute cigarettes.

Oral submission I would like the opportunity to speak to the Committee and answer their questions on these three aspects and any others, when it visits Christchurch.

Sincerely

Murray Laugesen QSO, WHO medalist in tobacco control
Public health physician

¹ Laugesen M, Fowles J. Marlboro Ultra Smooth: a potentially reduced exposure cigarette? *Tobacco Control* 2006;15:430-435; doi:10.1136/tc.2006.016055.

² Scragg R, Wellman R, Laugesen M, DiFranza J. 'Diminished Autonomy over Tobacco Can Appear With the First Cigarettes' *Addictive Behaviours* 2008. Doi:10.1016/j.addbeh.2007.12.002.

³ Jed E. Rose, James E. Turner, Thangaraju Murugesan, Frederique M. Behm, Chris J. Wynne, and Murray Laugesen, Pulmonary delivery of nicotine pyruvate: sensory and pharmacokinetic characteristics. Poster submitted to 16th Annual Conference, Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco, Baltimore MD, USA, 24-27 February 2010.

⁴ Murray Laugesen, Marewa Glover, Trish Fraser, Ross McCormick, John Scott. Cigarettes and Smoking tobacco no longer sold by 2020: here's how. Submitted to *NZ Med J*, January 2010.