

Congratulations, Opotiki

Your parks, reserves and playgrounds will soon be smokefree!

Opotiki's outdoor spaces are going smokefree!

The Opotiki District Council, with the support of Toi Te Ora - Public Health, has adopted an educational Smokefree Outdoor Spaces policy that will see all playgrounds, parks, sportsfields, reserves, gardens and beaches in the district become smokefree from March 1.

Signs designed by local artist Jamie Boynton will soon go up at various locations, including the skate park, pipi beds, Hikuwai Beach, Hikutaia Domain, the Rose Gardens and War Memorial Park reminding people not to light up in public.

The policy is all about normalising non-smoking and encouraging positive role models for children and young people in the Opotiki district. The less young people see smoking around them the less likely they are to take it up.

Parks and reserves are where young

people play, socialise and compete. By agreeing not to smoke around Opotiki's young people, adults are serving as positive smokefree role models. It may even help anyone who wishes to give up the habit.

A recent study in Opotiki found over 1000 cigarette butts in Memorial Park, the Rose Gardens, John Burdett Park, the skate park, and Princess Street Reserve! The policy also aims to protect the natural environment from the detriments of smoke butts.

Opotiki District Council is the fourth council in New Zealand to adopt a comprehensive educational policy like this and residents are encouraged to get behind it and say "no" to smoking.

Let's make the Eastern Bay a better and cleaner place to live in by supporting the Smokefree Outdoor Spaces policy!

Toi Te Ora
Public Health
LAKES AND BAY OF PLENTY



Artist's impression of the smokefree signs soon to go up in Opotiki. Designed by Jamie Boynton

Opotiki District Council answers your questions about Smokefree Opotiki

What do they reckon?



"This is a great initiative. I can remember years ago when I was a rugby referee, going into the after-match function after a game - you could cut the air with a knife it was so thick with smoke.

I'm not too worried about adults if they choose to smoke but I am worried about young children and unborn babies. Young lungs need fresh air, not smoke, and it's our responsibility to make sure they get it."

Robbie Petersen
Opotiki District Councillor



"Having smokefree parks and playgrounds is all about protecting our tamariki. We don't smoke around them at school so why should we think it's okay to light up in front of them in playgrounds and on sportsfields. Those are places for running around, playing and being healthy - not smoking."

Jacqueline Hayes-Kingi
Pathway 2 Health Co-ordinator



"We're smokefree at Opotiki Primary and although we have some smokers on the staff they go elsewhere to smoke. I think this is a great thing and I hope the whole community will get behind it and make it a success. We should not be modelling smoking in front of our children."

Tony Howe
Principal Opotiki Primary



I have a smokefree home environment and would love to see a smokefree environment in the parks and playgrounds of our communities. Smoking is unattractive, degrading and unhealthy.

A healthy environment is a smokefree environment.

Ruka Hudson
Community Member

There are so many things going on in our communities, why would we make smokefree environments a priority?

Smoking is the greatest single preventable cause of death in New Zealand, causing a quarter of all cancer deaths. Second-hand smoke is also a serious, and often underestimated, public health issue, especially for children. If cigarettes were invented today they would not be allowed onto the market. Expanding smokefree areas is a vitally important way of denormalising smoking and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Why do we need smokefree public places?

Smokefree parks are all about protecting children and young people. We know from research that increased smokefree environments will contribute towards fewer young people beginning to smoke - the less they see smoking, the less 'normal' it will seem. Few parents, smokers or non-smokers, want their children to start to smoke. Adults using the parks will be smokefree role models for children and young people; rather than giving the message that smoking is just another part of life by smoking in front of them.

How will the Smokefree Outdoor Spaces policy work?

The policy is all about education and empowerment. Signage and publicity will encourage the public to maintain a clean, healthy environment in areas that are primarily used by young people for sporting and recreation activity. This signage and publicity will ask the public not to smoke in council-owned open areas. Activities run by the council will also be 100 per cent smokefree. It is important the policy is seen as educative rather than punitive. It's not about punishing smokers, but about providing smokefree role-modelling and protecting the young.

How will the policy be enforced?

Experience in localities with smokefree public places policies so far has been that the public are quick to comply. Smokers are generally very considerate, and will smoke outside smokefree areas. However, if someone does light up in a smokefree area, other users of that space will be empowered by the policy to ask them to put their cigarette out, or move away from the smokefree area to smoke. For this reason, policing and enforcement have not been necessary in any of the localities where smokefree public places have been introduced.

The Mayor's Challenge

Everyone knows I'm a smoker but I try to be a responsible one and never light up in places where there are lots of people, particularly children, crowded around playing sport or enjoying themselves. I challenge all smokers in the community to use their commonsense and do the same. I'd also like to see other councils in the Bay of Plenty follow Opotiki's lead and make their parks and playgrounds smoke-free.

- Mayor John Forbes