

## Case study: Invercargill

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### 1.1 Background

In 2006 Invercargill opened a new velodrome, which was attached to an existing indoor sports stadium and sports offices. It created a well-defined space that encompassed the Surrey Park children's playground.

Council staff realised this presented an opportunity to encourage the public to make the area where children and families congregate smokefree, and in May 2006 the Invercargill City Council adopted a smokefree status for the playground.



This move by Invercargill City Council presented the local smokefree coalition, Smokefree Murihiku, with a great opportunity to build on the initiative and progress smokefree outdoor public places in the Invercargill area.

### 1.2 Implementation

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In 2008 Smokefree Murihiku members made a number of submissions to both the Council's Annual Plan and its Queens Park Management Plan to extend the number of smokefree playgrounds.

To gain support and add weight to future submissions, in August 2007, Smokefree Murihiku used the local body elections as an opportunity to survey candidates' opinions on the issue. They also offered additional information to candidates including the Cancer Society's publication *Smokefree for a cleaner and healthier community*.

The survey revealed that 95 percent of candidates supported smokefree playgrounds, and 65 percent were in favour of smokefree parks.

#### 1.2.1 Approach to council

Smokefree Murihiku prepared a four page document to present to the Council's Works and Services Committee, which is responsible for the city's parks and playgrounds. The document contained the candidates' views, other supporting evidence and an explanation of how a wider smokefree outdoor public places policy would further the Council's long term community outcomes. These included

Invercargill's Safe and Healthy People, Sustainable City and Environment, and Active City outcomes.

Committee members agreed to receive the information and the Committee Chair requested the document be sent to the full Council.

In June 2008 an extraordinary Council meeting was held to deal with submissions to the Annual Plan. At this meeting, the Council officially decided to put up smokefree signs up in all playgrounds in Invercargill city.

A further submission offering assistance with implementing the policy was made by Smokefree Murihiku at an Invercargill City Council public forum. Two members of the Invercargill Youth Council, who were also Cancer Society Smokefree Youth Ambassadors, spoke in favour of smokefree playgrounds.

### 1.2.2 Budget

The Council provided a budget \$5000 to fund the smokefree playgrounds. However, it was decided that this was not sufficient to cover all costs so the Cancer Society, a local PHO and a local public health cell each contributed an extra \$1000, bringing the total budget to \$8000.

### 1.2.3 Promotion

Senior councillors were very impressed by the 'youth voice' at the forum and asked for a copy of the speech. It was printed in full in the City Council Business News section of *The Southland Times*.

Signage in Russell Square Playground – one of the five main playgrounds in Invercargill – was officially launched in October 2008. Media were invited to the launch along with Invercargill councillors and local smokefree groups. The launch received coverage in *The Southland Times* and *The Southland Express*.

### 1.2.4 Policy wording

No formal smokefree playgrounds policy has been developed by Invercargill at present, but the council is encouraging any organisation that runs an event in a park facility to make the event smokefree and states:

**Policies:**

**3.24.1** Groups booking events in Queens Park will be encouraged to actively promote their events as smokefree.

**3.24.3** Council will encourage the public to be smokefree when using Queens Park.

Smokefree Murihiku is still advocating for a formal policy to be developed but so far Invercargill City Council has not addressed this issue.

## 1.3 Evaluation

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Although no formal evaluation process has been put in place, Council staff believe there is a high level of voluntary compliance in smokefree areas. It has also been observed that less cleanup is required in Queens Park following events that have taken place.

### 1.3.1 What worked well

Smokefree Murihiku has found the approach of offering to help the Council achieve something – as opposed to demanding change – resulted in a cooperative working relationship between the Council and smokefree advocates.

Background advocacy was also essential in the process. Surveying local candidates and taking this opportunity to offer more information on the subject raised awareness considerably. Survey results also gave Smokefree Murihiku leverage to take their next steps.

The public forum gave the opportunity for a ‘youth voice’ to be heard and resulted in publicity while impressing councillors. It was effective to have a voice heard that was not from the health sector.

### 1.3.2 What didn't work so well

There is no formal evaluation process to assess voluntary compliance with the smokefree status of outdoor public places, which may have been a useful tool. The lack of monitoring and evaluation reduced Council's ability to assess the public's compliance with smokefree policies in the playgrounds.

## 1.3 Suggestions

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The following suggestions to health promoters working on smokefree policy implementation come from a key member of the Smokefree Murihiku team:

- Build relationships. If councillors know you, they are more likely to respond well. Councils are still learning that creating wellness in the community is part of their responsibility and they often need assistance in understanding how to put it into practice. The right approach can make success around the smokefree issue truly a ‘feel good’ factor for councils.
- Take things step by step. Even small steps are important in the process as it builds confidence within councils. Finding a positive response from the public encourages people to take further steps.