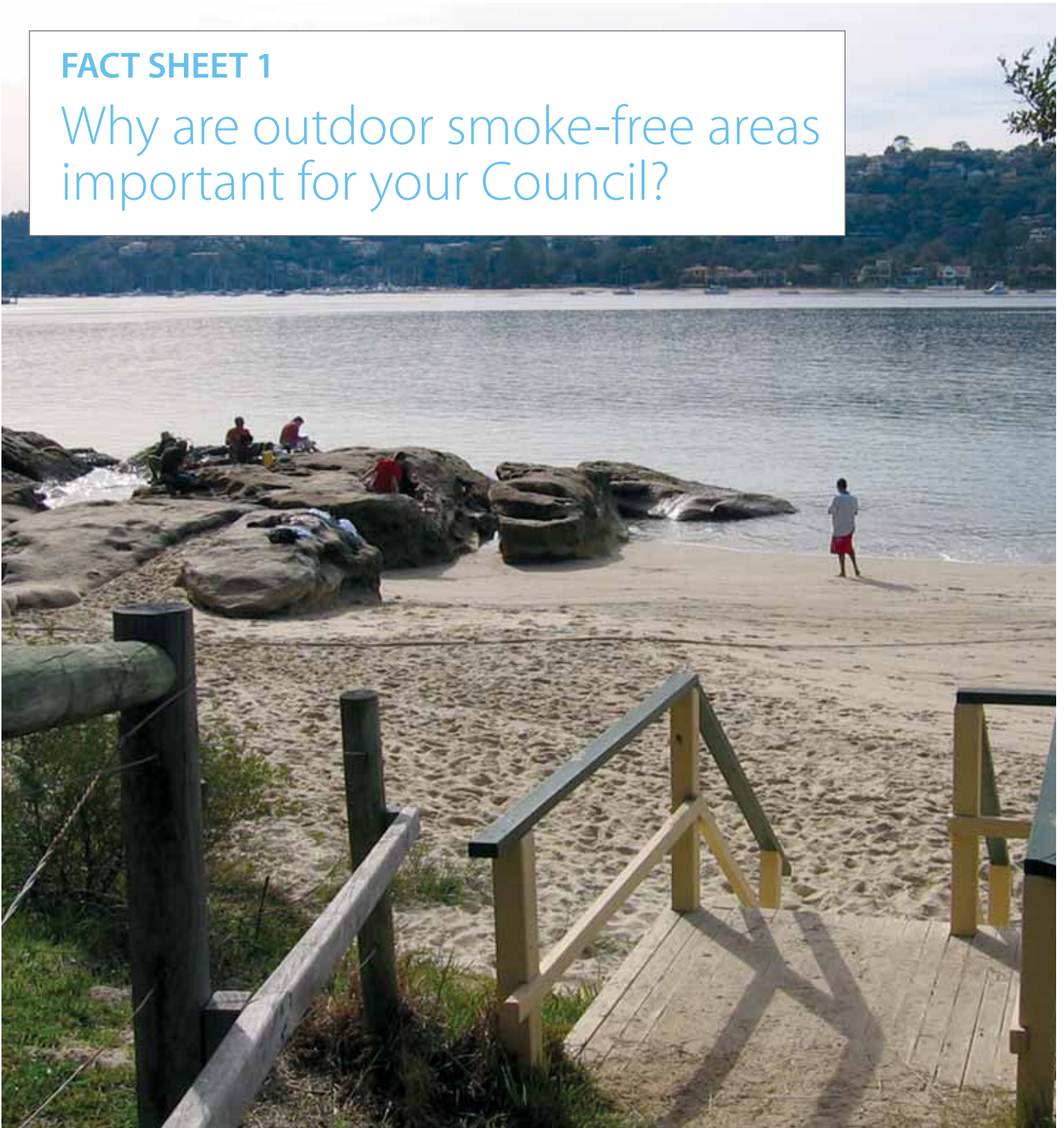


## FACT SHEET 1

# Why are outdoor smoke-free areas important for your Council?



Introducing outdoor smoke-free areas is a positive step that your local Council can take to protect the community from second-hand smoke while at the same time promoting positive health messages and a cleaner, safer environment.



## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Increasing community awareness of the harmful effects of second-hand smoke has led the community to accept, and expect the availability of smoke-free areas. Given that over 82% of the NSW population are non-smokers<sup>1</sup> a Council's decision to introduce smoke-free areas is often in response to community expectations.

In December 2006, a survey<sup>2</sup> of 2,400 NSW residents found overwhelming support for smoking restrictions in the following areas:

- 92% support bans in children's playgrounds
- 85% support bans outside workplace doors/entrances
- 80% support bans in sports stadiums
- 69% support bans in outdoor dining areas
- In addition, 65% say they avoid places where they may be exposed to other people's smoke.

## HEALTH IMPACTS

There is substantial evidence linking exposure to second-hand smoke with a range of serious and life threatening health impacts including heart disease, cancer, asthma and other respiratory problems.<sup>3</sup> Children exposed to second-hand smoke are at an increased risk of asthma, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), acute respiratory infections and ear problems.

While most of the evidence relates to indoor exposure, there is emerging evidence on how smoking affects air quality in outdoor locations such as alfresco cafes and playgrounds.<sup>4,5,6,7,8</sup> A recent study which measured cigarette smoke levels in a variety of outdoor locations showed that a person sitting near a smoker in an outdoor area could be exposed to levels of cigarette smoke similar to the exposure of someone sitting in an indoor tavern where smoking is allowed.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the second-hand smoke in outdoor areas where people tend to congregate, including alfresco dining areas, sports stadiums and concert venues, can present a real health risk to patrons and staff.

There is also evidence to suggest that smoking bans support smokers who are trying to quit as well as reduce their overall cigarette consumption.<sup>10</sup> Fifty four percent of smokers who had tried to quit found that seeing someone with a cigarette was a trigger to relapse, while 40% said that smelling a cigarette was a trigger to relapse, according to a 2006 study.<sup>2</sup>

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Cigarettes are the most littered item in the world.<sup>12</sup> Consistently one of the most common items found during Clean Up Australia Day, cigarette butts make up 31% of the top 10 items found and almost 50% of litter in urban areas.<sup>13</sup> Cigarette butts are not biodegradable and take up to five years to break down. Outdoor smoking bans can help to reduce the amount of cigarette butt litter and provide a substantial cost saving through reduced clean-up costs.

A policy for reducing butt litter should include extending smoke-free areas. While public education on responsible disposal may form part of a local strategy, NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change research has found that this alone will not reduce butt litter.<sup>14</sup> Councils should be especially wary of education-only strategies funded by tobacco industry-funded organisations, such as the Butt Littering Trust (see Fact Sheet 4 for more information on the Trust).

## CURRENT LEGISLATION

Smoking in enclosed public places in NSW is regulated by the *NSW Smoke-Free Environment Act 2000*<sup>15</sup>.

However, these laws make no provision for controlling outdoor smoking in places where people congregate, such as alfresco dining areas, sporting fields and playgrounds.

Under the *NSW Local Government Act 1993*, Councils have the power to legislate in their own jurisdictions to protect their local communities from the effects of second-hand smoke. (See Fact Sheet 2 for more information.)

92% of people surveyed support bans in children's playgrounds, according to a 2006 survey of 2400 NSW residents<sup>2</sup>.



A recent study which measured cigarette smoke levels in a variety of outdoor locations showed that a person sitting near a smoker in an outdoor area could be exposed to levels of cigarette smoke similar to the exposure of someone sitting in an indoor tavern where smoking is allowed.<sup>9</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 NSW Population Health Survey 2006, Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health
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- 9 Klepeis NE, Ott WR, Switzer p. Real-Time Measurement of Outdoor Tobacco Smoke Particles. *Journal of the Air and Waste Management Association* 2007; 57:522-534.
- 10 Chapman S, Borland R, Scollo M, R C Brownson, A Dominello and S Woodward. The impact of smoke-free workplaces on declining cigarette consumption in Australia and the United States. *Am J Pub Health* 1999;89:1018-23
- 12 Cigarettelitter.org, "Cigarette Litter" <http://www.cigarettelitter.org>, Accessed May 2002
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