

FACT SHEET 3

Case studies : Neighbourhood friendly smoke-free councils



Outdoor smoking restrictions are becoming more common nationally and internationally. Within Australia, there is both State and Local Government legislation restricting smoking in some outdoor areas.

Over fifty NSW Councils have already introduced smoke-free outdoor areas within their localities. The areas covered by these policies vary between Councils and may include: within 10 metres of children's playgrounds, at sporting fields, alfresco dining areas, Council run and sponsored events, beaches, reserves and parks.



The following case studies provide insight into the experiences of two NSW Councils who have implemented smoke-free policies in specific outdoor public places within their communities.

MOSMAN MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Mosman Municipal Council first banned smoking in playgrounds, sporting fields, bushland, foreshore reserves and beaches in June 2004. Following this, in September 2004 the smoke-free bans were extended to alfresco dining areas and within 10m of Council owned buildings. These bans were so popular with residents that in 2007 the Council extended them to cover all parks, public squares, bus shelters, Council car parks, alfresco eateries and beaches. Smoking is also banned within 10m of the entrance to Council-run buildings.

Mosman Councillor Denise Wilton said, "This is an issue about health and welfare - people have a right to breathe fresh air. We're very happy we're leaders in this field and we'd invite other Councils to join us," said Cr Wilton.

Mosman Municipal Council's initiatives have received considerable support both from the local community and people living in other Council areas. In September 2004 after media publicity about Mosman's outdoor smoking bans, a National Nine News Poll asking "Should Councils ban smoking in outdoor areas?" found 77% of respondents supported such a ban.¹ Similarly, Sky News ran a poll in which 78% of respondents agreed that Councils should ban smoking in outdoor areas.² More recently, the Sydney Morning Herald conducted an online poll asking if the 2007 smoking bans introduced by Mosman Municipal Council are too harsh. 74% of respondents reported that the measures are appropriate.³

Another positive outcome for Mosman Municipal Council is the reduction in butt litter pollution and reduced cleaning costs associated with cleaning the local beaches. Less invasive beach cleaning techniques are now used, as there has been a vast reduction in cigarette litter.

Mosman Municipal Council joined neighbouring Councils, Manly and Warringah, in the Smoke-free Zones campaign to ensure that the message about the smoking bans was consistent across the local area. The Smoke-free Zones campaign was an initiative of Manly Council, to engage community support for Smoke-free Zones, rather than adopting a heavy-handed enforcement type approach. This ensures that compliance is largely self-regulated as members of the local community feel confident in pointing out the no-smoking signs to smokers, especially tourists and other visitors to the area.

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SHOALHAVEN CITY COUNCIL

Shoalhaven City Council, a popular holiday destination, is located on the NSW South Coast.

Shoalhaven City Council was one of the first Councils in NSW to introduce bans at playgrounds and sporting venues in March 2004.

Prior to introducing the policy, Shoalhaven City Council had recognised a change in community attitudes towards smoking, in particular in areas frequented by children. To address this, in March 2004 Shoalhaven City Council introduced policy on smoke-free playgrounds and outdoor sporting facilities. The policy banned smoking within 10 metres of occupied Council managed children's playground equipment, at all Council managed outdoor sporting facilities and Council run events. The policy was supported by signage at the venues, a digital and hardcopy brochure to educate the community and the option of a non-compliance penalty of \$110.

Enforcement is a frequently asked question when councils are considering bans on smoking in specific outdoor public spaces (See Fact Sheet 4). Shoalhaven City Council feels that education is a more sustainable approach than issuing fines to people who may be smoking in areas covered by the policy.

According to John Wells, Director City Services & Operations "People are quite compliant with the policy. Clear signage and information is displayed at the locations where smoking is banned. People who unknowingly smoke in an area covered by the ban are often informed by other community members that they are in a no-smoking area. In nearly all cases this is sufficient to result in the person simply moving to an area where they can smoke".

Shoalhaven City Council found local sporting associations were highly supportive of the bans. "The ban was well received by local sporting clubs. They helped Council promote the policy by informing their members, through brochures and promotional material, that Council sporting facilities were now smoke-free" said Mr Wells.

For further information:

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FOOTNOTES

- 1 National Nine News Poll, Reported on National Nine News September 2004
- 2 Sky News, Willessee Across Australia Online Poll. Reported on Sky News September 2004
- 3 Sydney Morning Herald Online Poll, Reported in Sydney Morning Herald April 2007