

Auckland smoking ban at footpath dining areas deemed 'unfair targeting'

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GRAHAME COX/STUFF

Places with outdoor footpath dining such as Ponsonby's SPQR restaurant would have to make sure their outdoor dining area was smokefree by November.

More than 800 Auckland restaurants have two weeks to ensure their footpath dining areas are smokefree.

[Auckland Council has outlined a policy to bans smoking tobacco on beaches, shared urban spaces, council land and al fresco dining areas](#) from the start of November.

The move has been applauded by the likes of the Cancer Society and Hapai Te Hauora - but Hospitality New Zealand said the policy unfairly targets some restaurants over others.



SUPPLIED

Hospitality New Zealand's Nadine Mehlhopt said there were better ways at helping Auckland become smokefree, other than targeting some restaurants.

Auckland regional manager Nadine Mehlhopt said that of the 4,500 restaurants and cafes in Auckland with outdoor smoking areas, the policy will only affect the 800 with footpath dining.

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Those restaurants have a street trading license, she said, where they lease the footpath off the council.

Take the bars along Ponsonby Rd, central Auckland, for example.

Bars such as SPQR and Chapel Bar have street trading licences, meaning their footpath dining areas would have to become smokefree by November, Mehlhopt said.

They might see some of their usual smoking customers take their business elsewhere.



ROBERT CHARLES/STUFF

Auckland beaches, shared urban spaces, council land and outdoor footpath dining areas will become smoke free from the start of November.

"If the smokers can't smoke and dine on those seats they can just literally walk down the street to Long Room, Revelry or Freeman and Grey who all have their own courtyard areas."

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Manager of Ponsonby's SPQR Michaela Slovakova estimated that a quarter of their outdoor diners were also smokers.

"I think it is definitely going to affect business. Smokers will often request outdoor seats if they want a cigarette with their glass of wine and tapas.



SUPPLIED

The Cancer Society's John Loof welcomed the council's decision that requires all outdoor dining on footpath to become smokefree by November.

"If they can't get that here they will go somewhere else where they can."

Another popular place for outdoor footpath dining was Auckland's Wynyard Quarter restaurants.

The Conservatory Manager Dinah Johnston said outdoor diners who want a cigarette with their meal will just have to wait until after their meal or go for a walk somewhere else.



WIKICOMMONS

Vaping or smoking e-cigarettes would still be allowed in public spaces.

Mehlhoft applauded the council's desire to become smokefree, but said there were better ways to do it by targeting some restaurants over others.

"There are much better ways to have done this such as working closer with industry, by getting businesses to be champions or by offering incentives."

The policy was met with support, however, from Maori Health Group Hapai Te Hauora.



FLEUR MEALING/STUFF

Auckland's beaches, including iconic spots such as Takapuna, are also going smokefree.

National manager of tobacco control advocacy, Zoe Hawke, said Maori and Pacific communities had disproportionately high rates of smoking, and every drop in the bucket helps.

"We were advocating and supporting for the move to increase smokefree environments in Auckland."

She said the move would help to denormalise smoking and remove triggers for whanau trying to quit.

"We don't want our kids to see smoking everywhere and think it is normal behaviour."

The Cancer Society's chief executive John Loof also welcomed Auckland Council's move.

"Tobacco is the number-one cause of preventable cancer in Auckland. [The] policy shows they have stepped up to their responsibility to help reduce the devastating impact tobacco has on Auckland families, our communities and the environment."

"Filling the outdoor areas of our region's wonderful cafes and restaurants with cigarette smoke just doesn't seem logical anymore".

The policy is part of the council's Smokefree 2025 plan, which is aligned with the central government's vision of becoming a smokefree nation in the same year.

It excluded 'vaping' smoking e-cigarettes, which didn't include tobacco.

Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death in New Zealand.

5000 Kiwis die annually from smoking-related diseases.

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