



Auckland Zoo Goes Smokefree

A CASE STUDY, 2010



Auckland Zoo has New Zealand's largest collection of animals and is recognised as one of the most progressive zoos in the world.

A winner of national and international environmental-related awards, it is home to 117 different species and more than 700 animals, and welcomes approximately 650,000 visitors each year. Auckland Zoo has made a significant contribution to influencing and making smokefree environments normal. The Zoo developed a smokefree policy and worked together with Cancer Society, Auckland Division to implement it. This case study illustrates a strategic partnership to create environmental and organisational change.

The decision to go totally smokefree was driven by zoo visitor complaints and the public expectation that Auckland Zoo was already smokefree. There are no legislated requirements for outdoor areas such as the Zoo to be smokefree. However, there are an increasing number of parks and other public facilities that are voluntarily choosing to become smokefree. In many local councils that have designated parks smokefree, including playgrounds and sports fields, the public are very supportive of the change and there has been a high level of compliance.

This case study covers some of the issues faced in the journey of Auckland Zoo going smokefree and our learnings for why this was such a successful joint venture.

Why did you decide to introduce a Smokefree policy at Auckland Zoo?

The majority of Auckland Zoo's visitors are children and their families, so we think it is important to provide a healthy environment where children don't see people smoking. Supporting this, we had received feedback that many of our visitors expected Auckland Zoo to be smokefree, and some were surprised to learn that we were not. We had also received feedback from some visitors that second-hand smoke was making their Zoo visit less enjoyable. This move also supports staff presenting as good role models, particularly when in uniform and other smokefree policies in particular settings such as schools when school groups visit the zoo.



Why did you decide to make the Zoo a completely Smokefree venue?

Before we implemented a Smokefree policy we consulted with some of the Australian zoos and other New Zealand sites who had already introduced Smokefree policies. Their experience was that a completely Smokefree policy was simpler to enforce than allowing smoking in designated areas within the Zoo.

What are the details of your Smokefree policy?

There is no smoking for visitors anywhere on the Zoo grounds. If visitors want to smoke they have to leave the Zoo grounds to do so. Any visitor who is seen smoking will be approached by a member of staff and asked to extinguish their cigarette or, if they wish to continue smoking, to move to an area outside the Zoo.

We have introduced a designated smoking area outside of the main entrance to try to avoid having groups of people smoking at the Zoo gates.

The Zoo's policy specifies designated smoking areas for staff within the Zoo, but these areas are out of sight of the public. The rationale behind this was that Zoo staff can be perceived as role models, particularly the Zoo Keepers who feature on 'The Zoo' television show, and we did not want children who visit the Zoo to see their role models smoking. We want to be a responsible employer and believe we need to provide these designated areas alongside supporting staff who are non-smokers or staff who are trying to quit.

What happens if someone is smoking on Zoo grounds now?

If staff or volunteers see visitors to the Zoo smoking they will approach the person smoking and inform them about the Smokefree policy. The person smoking is directed to the designated smoking area just outside the Zoo grounds which is clearly signposted.



Signage outside of the main gates developed by Auckland Zoo. Visitors are asked to go to the smoking area outside of the Zoo grounds.



What processes did you have to go through to get the Smokefree policy adopted?

Initially the issue was raised by our Visitor Services Manager after reviewing customer feedback. The issue then went to our management team who agreed with the recommendation.

A recommendation was then put to the Zoo Board (a committee of Auckland City Council) for their endorsement. There was full support for the adoption of the smokefree policy.

Was it easy to get the policy adopted by council?

Having gained the support of the Zoo's senior management team, a full report was submitted to the Zoo Board, with relevant background, issues, and options. We found the Council to be very supportive of implementing a completely Smokefree policy. In our opinion the reason why it was so well supported was because more public

facilities are making this type of policy change, other zoos have done it, and the public seem to expect it now. The Zoo Board opted for the completely Smokefree policy as recommended.

How do you let visitors to the Zoo know that you have a completely Smokefree policy?

A communications plan was put together before the Smokefree policy was launched to ensure visitors would be effectively informed about the Smokefree policy. We also made sure that our Friends of the Zoo (annual pass holders) knew about the change through our regular monthly email updates. We looked at all the ways we already contact our visitors and tapped into that e.g. the website, Friends of the Zoo newsletters, media networks, and promotional material. We considered and used all relevant methods of communication.

The Smokefree policy is noted on the Zoo website in the visitor information section: <http://www.aucklandzoo.co.nz/default.asp?sectionID=99>, and is highlighted on event promotional material and tickets.

Signage was strategically placed so that the message was clear but did not detract from the Zoo experience. We picked locations for signage by asking staff for suggestions and from the result of a butt count to establish where people were commonly smoking. We chose to use the standard New Zealand Smokefree signage at the entrance and also developed our own signage based on the Smokefree logo for the front gate and elsewhere around the Zoo.

There was significant media coverage of the Smokefree policy at the time of its launch on World Smokefree Day, 31 March 2010. We also had Cancer Society Auckland staff and volunteers letting all visitors know about the policy during the first weekend of its launch.



The standard smokefree signage used throughout Zoo grounds.

Has the policy been easy to enforce so far?

The feedback we got at the launch of our policy is that most people thought the Zoo was already Smokefree so this change in policy has meant very little difference for most Zoo visitors.

Generally there has been excellent compliance with the new Smokefree policy and there have only been a few instances where staff have had to remind visitors about the policy.

We have had a little confusion by some visitors from overseas (who are used to the international no smoking symbol) who have interpreted the NZ Smokefree logo on signage to indicate that you can smoke here.



The international 'no smoking' symbol

However, when we have approached visitors and explained the policy we have found people to be apologetic and very compliant, and we are adapting our signage to prevent this confusion.

How have the public responded to your new Smokefree policy?

We have had great support for our new Smokefree policy.

As we said, we have found that most people thought that the Zoo was already Smokefree and all other feedback is that the new policy is great. We have not had any complaints from visitors about the Smokefree policy.

The public response is also a reflection of the fact that 80% of the population don't smoke, and that smokers are generally very considerate, especially when there is clear signage explaining where people can and can't smoke.



What did you do to launch the policy?

We decided to launch the Smokefree policy to coincide with World Smokefree Day, May 31st.

Internally to launch the policy we held a staff briefing and staff were offered packs that included some Smokefree merchandise and quit information for Zoo staff who smoke.

To launch the policy to the general public we put out a press release (which was very well picked up) and we had volunteers from the Cancer Society Auckland at the Zoo entrance the weekend before World Smokefree Day letting visitors know about the new Smokefree policy and giving away mints and other merchandise.

The Zoo got a lot of media attention at the launch of the Smokefree policy. How did you generate this much media?

A joint press release was prepared from Auckland Zoo and Cancer Society Auckland Division – along with individual releases. These were circulated to both agencies media networks prior to the launch event.



We were actually quite surprised by the amount of media generated by our announcement of a completely Smokefree policy. There were a total of eleven newspaper articles including one on the front page of the New Zealand Herald, 2 Radio interviews, and an interview on World TV (local Asian TV news show).

Have you had a problem with people congregating at the Zoo entrance to smoke?

While there have been a few people smoking at the Zoo entrance this has not been a major issue for us and does not occur very frequently.

Zoo staff were made aware this could happen before the launch. Staff were encouraged to move people away from the entrance and along to the designated smoking area if they saw this happening. This is where our planning paid off as we had anticipated this and carried out appropriate staff training.

We also see it as a positive outcome when people have made the effort to leave Zoo grounds before smoking.

How did you work with staff to ensure they were onboard with the Smokefree policy?

At first there were some concerns raised by some staff about the introduction of a Smokefree policy. Throughout the process of developing the policy, staff were consulted to ensure that they supported the policy, understood why the policy was being implemented and were given the skills to be able to enforce the policy.

Staff were consulted about where they saw people smoking most regularly and asked to recommend where the designated staff smoking areas should be.

Staff were given information on the procedure for appropriately managing the situation if they see a visitor smoking inside the Zoo.

Information about quitting was offered to staff who smoked at the time the policy was announced.

Have you done anything for staff who smoke?

The Zoo recognises that by creating a supportive Smokefree environment we would be supporting our staff who are trying to quit.

In the lead up to the Smokefree policy being launched we had one of our Zoo teams trying to quit and they were supported to do so. At the launch of the policy, quitting information was made available to all staff who smoked, and since the launch of the Smokefree policy we have had a number of staff who have successfully quit.

What tips could you give to others who are working to implement a Smokefree policy?

The key for us was consulting and communicating with staff about how the policy would work and how they could contribute to the successful implementation of the policy. It was also important to communicate the policy widely and clearly at the outset. This ensures that all visitors are aware that they are not allowed to smoke inside Zoo grounds, minimising the incidence of smokers in the Zoo and the need to intervene.

What has been the most successful ingredient of the Smokefree policy for you?

Simplicity! We did consider designating a few areas within the Zoo where smoking would be permitted, but felt that this could be confusing for visitors and potentially difficult to manage. Our policy is clear – there is no smoking for visitors anywhere within the Zoo – and this prevents any confusion or misunderstanding about where people can and can't smoke.



For more information about this case study or how to implement policy change in other settings, please contact the Cancer Society Auckland Health Promotion team on 09 308 0165.