

GASP response to 'Save our shop' campaign against the proposals to ban the display of tobacco

Get your facts right – Gasp tells Save our Shops campaign

Guernsey Adolescent Smokefree Project (GASP) chairperson, Alun Williams, has claimed that the Save our Shops campaign against the proposals to ban the display of tobacco is using the usual tobacco industry tricks of misinformation and confusion.

He comments:

At GASP we are concerned that a fundamental discussion about protecting children and young people from the impact of tobacco is being distracted by misinformation. We have seen similar tactics as the tobacco industry has tried to undermine the excellent work that Guernsey has done in reducing the incidence of tobacco use amongst young people.

We understand the anxieties of traders because tobacco sales have been so lucrative in the past. But times change and quite simply there are occasions when benefiting the public health must take precedence, and this is such an occasion. These displays are all about targeting children, promoting smoking to them, and no longer have a place in a community like Guernsey that cares about the health of its young people.

We can't afford to continue to send mixed messages to young people. There are plenty of anti-smoking messages around, yet to see tobacco alongside newspapers and sweets in shops like it is a normal everyday product contradicts those messages.

Of course the tobacco industry and its representatives are concerned. The main purpose of tobacco marketing is to attract new smokers since established smokers tend to remain loyal to a particular brand.

GASP will be writing to all tobacco retailers to highlight the inaccuracies in the statements that have been made by SOS and CITIMA representatives.

Please see over the page for a summary of the letter to the SOS representatives. For more information please contact Alun Williams on tel 710821 (W) or 726604 (H).

SOS claims that there is sketchy evidence that displays have little direct impact on young people's smoking.

SOS has ignored global research findings: research shows that point of sale display has a direct impact on young people's smoking. In 2006, almost half (46%) of UK teenagers were aware of tobacco display at point of sale and those professing an intention to smoke were more likely to recall brands that they had seen at the point of sale.

Similarly, research in Australia and the USA has shown that point of sale display advertising of cigarettes normalises tobacco use for children and creates a perception that tobacco is easily obtainable.

Jurisdictions that have enforced tobacco point of sale bans as part of a range of tobacco control measures have seen a decrease in smoking prevalence among young people. In Iceland the prevalence of daily smoking among 15-year-olds fell from 18.6% in 1999 before the cigarette display ban to 13.6% in 2003, two years after the law came into effect, and has continued to fall thereafter.

In Canada research has shown that banning point of sale displays in a growing number of provinces has coincided with a fall in smoking prevalence rates amongst 15–19-year-olds.

SoS claims that the financial impact of modifications to shops will be untenable

The estimate from the Association of Convenience Stores is that it will cost retailers £1000 to implement the proposed regulations. Surely the answer is that a small fraction of the money spent by the tobacco industry on in-store shelving and display could be used to help the retailers comply with new regulations.

SoS claims that the New Zealand parliament has decided against implementing a point of sale ban

The New Zealand parliament has deferred making a decision until more evidence is presented. Only this month it received evidence based on research with 25,000 young people. They found that 15-year-olds most exposed to point of sale displays are almost three times more likely to try to start smoking. It was identified that exposure to point of sale is a greater risk factor than even parental smoking.

SoS claims that proxy purchasing should be the priority [proxy purchasing is the purchasing of tobacco for under-18s]

A law has been in place since 1914 that prohibits the sell or supply of tobacco products to under-18-year-olds. The fine for selling or supplying to under-18-year-olds is £500 for the first offence and £1,000 for the second.