



**3 September 2020**

### **Kudos to City of Cape Town for taking bold smoke-free move**

As South Africa's Control of Tobacco and Electronic Delivery Systems Bill continues to await conclusion by the National Department of Health, a full two years after public consultation was completed, the City of Cape Town, our seat of parliament, is moving ahead with plans to become a smoke-free city. The City announced public buildings could soon become smoke-free as part of its participation in the [Bloomberg Partnership for Healthy Cities](#), a global network of 70 cities committed to saving lives by preventing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like cancer, diabetes, heart disease, stroke and chronic lung disease. Smoking is one of the risk factors for these diseases.

Health organisations supporting the [#ProtectourNext](#) movement to get the Bill passed, including the [National Council Against Smoking \(NCAS\)](#), the [South African Medical Research Council \(SAMRC\)](#), the [Cancer Association of South Africa \(CANSA\)](#) and the [Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa \(HSFSA\)](#), have praised the move and are calling on other cities and organisations to follow suit. "Kudos to the City of Cape Town as it joins 70 cities around the world in moving towards being a smoke-free city! This is smart, bold and a step ahead of SA legislation in the form of the new Tobacco Control Bill. The #Protectournext partners salute you!" says Savera Kalideen of NCAS.

Kalideen says that there is nothing stopping other organisations and businesses from becoming smoke-free. "The Wits Faculty of Health Sciences opted to become an entirely smoke-free zone from this September – banning the use of all tobacco products including vapes, hookah pipes and e-cigarettes or vape products. This is something we'd like to see more of: public places, universities, restaurants and other businesses taking early action on becoming smoke-free. Smoking is also a pandemic, killing over 42,000 South Africans and over 8 million people globally each year. This need for action and vigilance is even more critical now in light of COVID-19, a respiratory pandemic with NCDs as listed as dangerous co-morbidities."

While South Africa's current smoking legislation does prohibit smoking in public areas, it allows businesses to have designated smoking areas, provided these areas do not exceed 25% of the floor space. The City of Cape Town aims to change this to 100% prohibition of smoking in public spaces, a key element of the new Bill, which will remove designated smoking areas in all indoor smoking areas, such as restaurants, and ban outdoor smoking in some public areas such as beaches. It will also regulate e-cigarettes or vape products, which are currently unregulated. The Bill will further enact measures to better protect children from tobacco harm, such as banning cigarette vending machines, smoking in places taking care of children and smoking in cars with children under the age of 18. Restrictions on point-of-sale advertising of tobacco products and the enforcement of plain, unbranded packaging with graphic health warnings also form part of the new Bill.

Professor Pamela Naidoo of the Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa says, "We applaud the City of Cape Town for putting the health, including heart and brain health, of its residents and workforce first. We're so pleased to see the City of Cape Town promoting a smoke-free lifestyle and workplace as it takes steps to prevent the health harms caused by tobacco."

Professor Naidoo highlights that exposure to second hand smoke damages lungs and depresses the immune system, increasing susceptibility to chest and respiratory infections. "A smoke-free environment protects the lungs of all our people, particularly children and the elderly, by ensuring that they are not exposed to toxic second-hand smoke. I'd like to thank the City of Cape Town for taking the scientific evidence of the harms of tobacco smoking seriously."

Lorraine Govender of CANSA says, "Exposure to second-hand smoke is related to multiple diseases in children and adults. There is evidence that suggests second-hand smoke causes breast cancer, cancers of the nasal sinus, pharynx and larynx. This is an important step to reduce second-hand smoke exposure for the citizens of Cape Town, and we hope more cities will follow suit."

According to the South Africa Demographic and Health Survey, 25 percent of women and 42.9 percent of men in the Western Cape smoke daily. The health organisations would like to see this number come down, particularly considering we are fighting a respiratory pandemic.

Dr Catherine Egbe, Specialist Scientist (Tobacco Control) of the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Research Unit, South African Medical Research Council, says that with about half of non-smokers in South Africa exposed to second-hand smoke, the decision by the City of Cape Town is a welcome development, as this will protect more non-smokers from being exposed to second-hand smoke as they go about their day. "Smoke-free policies have been found to lead to reduction in pre-term births, reduced incidences of asthma and hospital attendance for asthma, as well as reduced heart attacks in other parts of the world where this legislation has been instituted. The City of Cape Town is taking a crucial step towards protecting the health of its citizens and deserves commendation for this. Other cities should take a cue from this approach."

Public Health Policy and Development Consultant Zanele Mthembu says while she is pleased to see a City like Cape Town taking matters in hand, more must be done to strengthen tobacco legislation in the country as a long-term public health measure. “We must protect society from tobacco harm through strengthening overall tobacco control measures and legislation, which have a proven positive impact on health worldwide. We call on the National Department of Health to finalise the revision of the Bill so that it can be processed to Cabinet, then Parliament and finally enacted into law. This will make it easier for South Africans to choose smoke-free lives, regulate e-cigarettes and decrease the impact of second-hand smoke on the majority of the population, who are non-smokers. Smoke-free has to become the norm if we aspire to become a healthier nation and reduce the burden on our health budget and system. This ultimately supports the aspirations of the National Health Insurance.”

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#### **HOW CAN YOU JOIN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE TOBACCO EPIDEMIC?**

- Follow @protectournext on social media and become an anti-tobacco warrior.
- Educate yourself and others on the harms of nicotine and tobacco product use.
- Support the implementation of the **Control of Tobacco Products and Electronic Delivery Systems Bill** in South Africa. This will improve tobacco control legislation and can help prevent industry exploitation of regulatory loopholes to manipulate children and adolescents to start using tobacco products like e-cigarettes, cigarettes and hookah pipes.

#### **Available for interview:**

**Savera Kalideen** and **Dr. Sharon Nyatsanza** from the National Council Against Smoking (NCAS)

**Professor Pamela Naidoo**, CEO, The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa

**Lorraine Govender**, National Advocacy Co-ordinator for the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA)

**Dr. Catherine Egbe** from the South African Medical Research Council (Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Research Unit)

**Zanele Mthembu**, Public Health Policy and Development Consultant

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**(ENDS)**

#### **RESOURCES TO HELP SMOKERS QUIT:**

- Call the **National Council Against Smoking - Quitline at 011 720 3145** for tips to help you stop smoking, or visit: [www.againstsmoking.co.za](http://www.againstsmoking.co.za) or WhatsApp on 0638282909
- **CANSA** runs an online programme which also provides support and information for smokers who would like to stop smoking on <http://www.ekickbutt.org.za/>.
- The **Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa** has professional staff that can provide educational support during the challenging time you may face during trying to quit tobacco smoking. During the period of the lockdown, you may call 084 2507374 for assistance.

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