

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Retailers caught selling cigarettes illegally to minors**

Four tobacco retailers in the Tasman area have been caught selling cigarettes to 15-year-old volunteers, under a tobacco controlled purchase operation which was undertaken by the Nelson Marlborough Public Health Service (PHS) in December 2018.

34 retailers in the Nelson and Tasman regions were visited by the volunteers. The volunteers attempted to buy cigarettes from the stores, under the supervision of adult PHS employees.

Public Health Service Operations Manager Sonya Briggs says: “Ideally we would have liked there to be no sales at all, but we are pleased that the majority of retailers asked the volunteers for their ID.”

Retailers are advised to always ask anyone who looks younger than 25 years for identification when selling tobacco products. The only acceptable forms of identification are a New Zealand drivers licence, passport, or a suitable 18+ card.

Mrs Briggs says that all businesses selling tobacco products need to be certain of their obligations under the *Smoke-Free Environments Act*, and pass on this important information to staff members.

#### **Background information**

Controlled purchase operations are conducted by Smoke-Free Enforcement Officers using an underage volunteer to ensure tobacco retailers comply with the Smoke-free Environments Act 1990 which prohibits the sale of tobacco products to persons under 18 years of age.

A retailer who sells tobacco products to underage buyers will be referred to the Ministry of Health and will be issued with infringement notices that carry \$500 fines.

The Public Health Service continues to monitor retailers of tobacco products who have sold to underage buyers and will carry out further Controlled Purchase Operations targeting those retailers.

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