

1 messages

paul

## STAND Projects

Paul

Thu, Apr 9 2015 12:50:54

To: cmaytum@

Bcc: vaping@

Dear Carol,

It is with mixed feelings that I feel compelled to write to you as the *Breathe California* Tobacco Programs Manager. There are several points that I wish to put across regarding the STAND project. I will endeavor to be as concise as possible.

I am a frequent visitor to social media, specifically *Twitter* and I attempt to engage with as many people that share my views as possible. It is through this medium that the STAND twitter account (<https://twitter.com/sacstand>) came to my attention, and subsequently the STAND website ([sacstand.org](http://sacstand.org)).

Both of these filled me with disquiet, specifically the message that is being put across. As a former smoker (20 years of 2-3 packs per day), I noticed a trend within the anti-smoking realms that seemed to target me specifically, not the habit that I had.

Several campaigns highlighted health concerns, whilst I do not disagree that there are indeed health concerns with smoking, the manner in which these campaigns were presented is my biggest cause for concern.

Looking through the STAND twitter account, there is a high level of stigmatisation of real smokers being presented through the choice of imagery and wording associated with the tweets. It is this particular method of campaigning that I find most disagreeable.

As an example, one of the tweets I saw from @sacstand last night was this:

The screenshot shows a tweet from the STAND Project (@sacSTAND) posted at 11:10 PM on April 7, 2015. The tweet text reads: "No matter how good you look, you still smell like butt. #nobutts #timetoquit #smokershelpline #smokefree #JeffWeCan". Below the text is a graphic with the text "NO MATTER HOW GOOD YOU LOOK YOU STILL SMELL LIKE BUTT" and "TIME TO QUIT. CALL THE CALIFORNIA SMOKER'S HELPLINE 1.800.NO.BUTTS". The graphic also features a man in a white shirt and a woman in a white top. The tweet has 1 retweet and 1 favorite. The Tabl logo is visible in the bottom right corner of the tweet area.

To an extent, messages like this can be construed as bullying. Almost every tweet on @sacstand is similar in nature, deliberate messaging aimed at stigmatizing smokers, of all ages. I feel I must remind you, and your team that there are *real people* that smoke, and those people have *real feelings*.

As a former smoker, I know exactly how I felt when I was a target of campaigns like these. **They did not make me want to quit smoking.** In fact, I ended up smoking far more. There are many smokers that feel the same way. They do not feel *encouraged* to quit smoking. They instead feel like outcasts, ostracized by the rest of society because of a choice they made.

The trouble with campaigns like this, is that they may have good intentions but the reality is, smokers do not listen to it, and the non-smokers take the message and twist it into hatred and disgust directed at those that do smoke. It is, put simply endorsing bullying of the minority, dressed up a *public health*.

Which neatly brings me on to my next point.

On the STAND website, one of the menu items is "Attack Tobacco" (link <http://www.sacstand.org/attack-tobacco>), which I can only assume is the plan behind the tweets I have already seen.

It would also appear that the page relating to electronic cigarettes contains a lot of misleading, and factually incorrect information. This would suggest one of two things:

- 1 - The site has not received any additional updates to improve the information presented
- 2 - There is a belief that the information provided is sufficient

Since 2013 there have been dozens of studies and research papers released on the subject of electronic cigarettes and tobacco harm reduction, with more being released regularly. Additionally, worldwide surveys are being conducted with the specific aim of determining the "gateway" theory, each of which has so far proven that such a theory *does not exist*. Further studies and surveys are of course required to conclusively prove this beyond any doubt, however based on all the information available at present, the majority of which I have actually read I can come to the following conclusions:

- Electronic cigarettes are useful as a potential cessation aid [1][2]
- Electronic cigarettes are substantially less harmful than smoking [3]
- Nicotine, whilst not entirely benign, is not as addictive as is generally thought [4][5][6][7]
- Electronic cigarettes, when used correctly are a *safer alternative* [8][9][10]
- Electronic cigarettes are *not a public health threat*

I ask you this, given that the STAND project is currently aiming a derogatory attack on smokers, how do you expect those real people to react?

In closing, I fully support methods that encourage smokers to utilise methods to either *reduce harm from OR quit smoking*. I cannot in good conscience support campaigns that include demonisation, stigmatization, or bullying of *real people*.

Paul [REDACTED]  
United Kingdom

[No competing interests]

#### References

- [1] <http://www.addictionjournal.org/press-releases/e-cigarette-use-for-quitteing-smoking-is-associated-with-improved-success-rates->
- [2] <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/add.12623/pdf>
- [3] <http://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/12/4/3915>
- [4] <http://www.gwern.net/Nicotine>
- [5] <http://www.bernd-mayer.com/nicotine-cardiovascular-function-heart-blood-vessels/>
- [6] <http://www.bernd-mayer.com/electronic-cigarettes-and-nicotine-poisoning/>
- [7] <http://www.bernd-mayer.com/nicotine-the-basics/>
- [8] <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc1413069>
- [9] <http://www.clivebates.com/?p=2706>
- [10] <http://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/10/6/2500/htm#sthash.D1oJjlin.dpuf>