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A win for public health as court finds that the temporary ban on sale of tobacco is rational

Statement of Savera Kalideen (NCAS Executive Director)

Johannesburg, S.A – The high court of South Africa Gauteng division ruled on Friday that the temporary ban on the sale of tobacco and vaping products during the COVID-19 pandemic is rational. It will save lives and ease the burden on our overstretched health system.

The National Council Against Smoking welcomes the judgement as a win for public health. The ruling reaffirms the duty of government to protect life and the health services.

Science shows that smoking worsens clinical outcomes for those infected with the virus. A review by the World Health Organization (WHO) concluded that smoking is associated with increased severity of disease and death in hospitalized COVID-19 patients. WHO recommends that tobacco users stop using tobacco.

People who stop using tobacco products are better able to fight infections and diseases such as Covid-19. Quitting improves lung function, immune response and cardiovascular health. Within 2 weeks after stopping smoking, lung function improves as the lung's natural cleaning system starts to work better. This is important in the face of this disease which targets the lungs and the respiratory system.

The Council encourages people who have quit during the lockdown to remain quit, but it has sympathy for the smokers who are finding it difficult. Help, advice and support is available from the Quit Line on 011 720 3145.

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For further information, contact:

Dr. Sharon Nyatsanza: 079 666 1356

Savera Kalideen: 071 227 0939

Email: ncasmedia@mweb.co.za