



Health Coalition
Aotearoa

Briefing to the Incoming Parliament

Health Coalition Aotearoa Policy Briefing
2023 – 2026



Health Coalition Aotearoa (HCA) is a coalition of 45 member organisations, supported by four expert panels, committed to closing the health prevention gap in Aotearoa with Te Tiriti-led, evidence-based policies that reduce consumption of harmful products and increase access to healthy food.

Prevention advocacy

Our expert panels for tobacco, alcohol, food policy and public health infrastructure advocate for population-level actions to achieve a healthier and more equitable Aotearoa New Zealand.

Collective expertise

Our expert panel members are leaders in their field using their collective academic and clinical knowledge, research, practice and networks to advocate for prevention policies and actions.

Policy development

We advocate for evidence-based, Te Tiriti-centered policies that will reduce the impact of harmful products on health and well-being, and increase access to healthy food.

Tēnā Koe,

Health Coalition Aotearoa (HCA) envisions a New Zealand in which everyone has access to healthy food and protections are in place against the health burden of harmful products – tobacco, alcohol, unhealthy foods and drinks.

HCA is a Te Tiriti o Waitangi-led coalition of 45 organisational members and over 75 public health professionals and experts working towards a healthier and more equitable Aotearoa.

As you know, when it comes to health: **'prevention is better than cure'**.

In Aotearoa, research has shown that tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy food are responsible for the preventable loss of almost one third of healthy life-years.

These harmful products cause disproportionate harm to Māori, Pacific and socio-economically deprived families. Communities are awash with cheap alcohol and fast-food outlets, have been abandoned by governments and given no regulatory tools to clean up the junk food and alcohol swamps that commercial operators have forced up on them.

There's a great opportunity for the Government to bring New Zealand into line with comparable countries by introducing world-leading preventative health measures.

Some progress has been made in recent years with the enactment of a Smokefree 2025 action plan, the passing of the Sale and Supply of Alcohol (community participation) Bill, and Ka Ora, Ka Ako – the healthy school lunches programme.

But there is plenty left to do to reduce preventable death

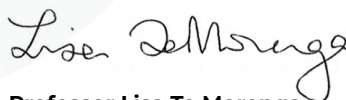
and disability and promote health.

Our briefing sets out specific actions and policies that can be taken in the Government's first 100 and 1000 days to make a significant difference.

We look forward to working with you to reduce harm and enhance the health and well-being of all New Zealanders.



Professor Boyd Swinburn
Co-chair, Health Coalition Aotearoa



Professor Lisa Te Morenga
Co-chair, Health Coalition Aotearoa



Preventable disease in Aotearoa

A third of preventable illness is caused by harmful products

Three commercially available products in Aotearoa cause almost one third of our healthy life-years lost every year – **alcohol, tobacco** and **unhealthy food**¹.

- > Alcohol is a cause of at least **seven** types of cancer including mouth, pharynx (throat), larynx (voice box), oesophagus, bowel, liver, and breast.
- > More than **800** New Zealanders die each year from their drinking; that is more than **2 per day**.
- > Tobacco will kill more than **half** of its long-term users.



ONE THIRD

of preventable healthy life-years lost caused by tobacco, alcohol & unhealthy food.



370,309

healthy life years lost each year.

The burden of preventable disease is higher for Māori, Pacific and those in high deprivation areas



One in four (22.6 per cent) deaths among Māori are attributable to smoking compared to **one in eight** (12.3%) for non-Māori and non-Pacific people.



Māori and Pasifika children see **three to five times** more alcohol marketing than other children.

Unhealthy foods are replacing healthy foods in our diet

JUST

10.4%

of adults reported eating the recommended five servings of vegetables or more per day.

And some struggle to access any food at all:

12.5%

of children lived in households where food runs out sometimes or often in 2021-22.

Preventable diseases cost billions of dollars every year

Type 2 diabetes:

\$2
billion²

Tobacco-related:

\$2.5
billion³

Alcohol-related:

\$7.85
billion⁴

There is growing public support for prevention policies

80%

of the public either support or are neutral to banning alcohol sponsorship at sporting, community, and other events attended by under 18-year-olds⁵.

Investment in prevention is inadequate

The Government typically allocates less than

0.5%

of the health budget to preventing harm from alcohol, tobacco and unhealthy food⁶.

Priorities to eliminate tobacco harm in Aotearoa New Zealand

Māori leadership is essential to eliminate tobacco harm in Aotearoa

The National-led Government committed to achieving the Smokefree 2025 goal in 2011 in response to recommendations by the Māori Affairs Select Committee. New Zealand is a signatory to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) which recognises indigenous rights, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) and has a civil responsibility to uphold these commitments.

In 2022 the world-leading Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products (Smoked Tobacco) Amendment Act (SERPA) was passed. Key measures in SERPA

(making cigarettes non-addictive, retailer reduction and Smokefree generation) and the Smokefree Aotearoa Action Plan will bring monumental, rapid and equitable declines in smoking, and must be fully implemented, following the timeline set out in the legislation. The Government must ensure Māori have a key role in the development and delivery of the SERPA measures because smoking prevalence remains highest amongst Māori with 19.9 per cent smoking daily. Smoking prevalence also imposes a greater burden on Pacific peoples (18.2% daily smoking) who must be appropriately resourced to support cessation among their communities.

FIRST 100 DAYS	FIRST 1000 DAYS
Fully commit to the implementation process for the tobacco control measures set out in SERPA.	Continue to fully resource implementation of SERPA measures with Māori involvement.
Ensure measures to support SERPA are adequately resourced including for Māori-led (and Pacific-led) initiatives eg, mass media cessation campaigns.	Māori Affairs Select Committee provides annual progress reports on Smokefree goals to Government.
Commit to engaging with key Māori voices and organisations and sufficiently resource the Māori Smokefree Advisory Group to achieve Smokefree aspirations.	Monitor, and enforce the SERPA tobacco control measures.
Direct the Ministry of Health to report annually to the Māori Affairs Select Committee on progress towards the Smokefree goal.	Develop and implement a plan to minimise use of heated tobacco & vaping products beyond 2025, and support cessation among those who wish to quit.
	Continue to monitor and mitigate emerging threats to the Smokefree goal (eg, new products).

Protect our rangatahi and young people from vaping

A lack of action by Government has enabled the proliferation of vaping products and e-cigarettes that are appealing in design, aggressively marketed, affordable, widely available and highly addictive. The direct result has been high uptake among young people. In a recent Year 10 survey (2022), ten per cent of students reported vaping daily, 21.7 per cent of rangatahi Māori reported daily vaping and 30-40 per cent of daily vapers had never smoked¹⁷. Use of vapes

has adverse effects on well-being¹⁸, particularly for young people, through addiction and broader social impacts such as disruption of schooling. As a signatory to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC), New Zealand is obliged to protect young people from potential vaping-related harms. Amendments passed in 2023 to address youth vaping are inadequate.

FIRST 100 DAYS	FIRST 1000 DAYS
Fully implement vaping control measures as set out in SERPA and SERPA (Vaping) Amendment Regulations 2023.	Amend the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products (Vaping) Amendment Regulations 2023 to fully protect never smokers from vaping initiation and addiction.
Begin the review process of SERPA to develop additional regulations to prevent the vaping industry from exploiting young people.	Strengthen monitoring and enforcement of the SERPA Vaping Amendment Regulations.
With Māori involvement develop a vaping cessation programme for rangatahi and young people.	Ensure Rangatahi and young people can access culturally appropriate vaping cessation services under clinical supervision.

Priorities to reduce harm from alcohol

Uphold commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in alcohol law

Although Māori are 2.5 times more likely to die from an alcohol-related cause than non-Māori⁹, current alcohol regulations exclude Māori involvement, limiting opportunities for Māori to address harm in their own communities^{10,11}. To address the disproportionate harm of alcohol to Māori we need to embed Te Tiriti in alcohol

law to ensure regulatory processes such as local alcohol policies (LAPs) uphold Te Tiriti commitments and relationships. Concerns about the absence of Te Tiriti in the Act were raised in 125 submissions to the Sale and Supply of Alcohol (Community Participation) Bill.

FIRST 100 DAYS	FIRST 1000 DAYS
Direct the Ministry of Justice to work with whānau, hapū and iwi Māori to develop guidance for Territorial Authorities to produce Te Tiriti o Waitangi-centred LAPs.	Work with whānau, hapū and iwi Māori to amend the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act, to centre Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and ensure appropriate authority for Māori to reduce alcohol harm and promote equitable outcomes.

Greater protection from alcohol marketing

Digital alcohol marketing has new and unregulated power to target specific groups, including teenagers and those at risk of dependence¹². Alcohol is normalised through sports and event sponsorship and merchandise, like tobacco was in the past¹³. Yet, when

tobacco sponsorship was removed there was no evidence of negative impacts on community sports and organisations. Reducing exposure to alcohol marketing will reduce harm.

FIRST 100 DAYS	FIRST 1000 DAYS
Increase the alcohol levy, and use funding to replace sponsorship of sports and events by alcohol companies for a period of five years.	Support the phase out of alcohol company sponsorship of sports and events over five years by supporting the fundraising capacity of community organisations.
Ensure digital alcohol marketing can be regulated by including it in the <i>Safer Online Services and Media Platforms</i> policy process currently underway.	In legislation, restrict alcohol company sponsorship of all sports and events and ban all digital and outdoor alcohol marketing.

Increase alcohol excise tax, and funding of prevention and treatment services

Alcohol has become much more affordable in the past decade, fuelling alcohol harm¹⁴. Lifting excise tax is a win-win solution; making alcohol progressively less affordable will prevent harm and raise revenue to

support prevention and treatment^{15,16}. This benefits the whole population and reduces harm among heavier and younger drinkers the most.

FIRST 100 DAYS	FIRST 1000 DAYS
Reduce alcohol intake by five per cent by implementing the Law Commission recommendation to increase prices for alcohol by ten per cent. This is estimated to require a 50 per cent increase to alcohol excise tax rates.	Increase Ministry of Health funding for alcohol harm prevention and treatment services, including funding Māori-led initiatives, a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) action plan, and classifying FASD as a disability.
Align taxation of wine with other alcohol beverages i.e. per litre of alcohol content.	Ensure annual excise tax adjustments make alcohol progressively less affordable over time.

Priorities to improve our food environments

Plan for a food system that delivers on health, the environment and equity

A cohesive national food and nutrition strategy is urgently needed to ensure all New Zealanders can access affordable, healthy food, and food production meets our economic needs without degrading the

environment. A national nutrition survey has not been completed for 15 years and is urgently needed to understand the impact of the food environment and regulations on population health.

FIRST 100 DAYS	FIRST 1000 DAYS
Commit to development of a national food and nutrition strategy based on the recommendations of the Public Health Advisory Committee (due: Jan 2024).	Develop and action a national food and nutrition strategy – including a national nutrition survey.

Make healthy food the norm for our kids

To address the lack of access to healthy food in Aotearoa, especially for food-insecure whānau, we need a commitment to proven programmes and strategies

with a view to expanding their reach in the longer-term. Access to healthy food is vital to reduce high rates of preventable diseases in Aotearoa.

FIRST 1000 DAYS
Commit to permanent base-line funding of Ka Ora, Ka Ako – the free healthy school lunches programme from the Ministry of Education and expand the programme to reach at least 50 per cent of schools facing the greatest socio-economic barriers (based on equity index data).
Invest in improving Ka Ora, Ka Ako – increase efficiencies through better planning, knowledge exchange between participating schools and food suppliers, ensuring meals appeal to students' preferences.
Develop a new regulation requiring all foods and drinks provided or sold in schools are healthy and sustainable.
Legislate to limit marketing of unhealthy foods to children.

Reduce sugary drinks consumption

Over the last five years, more than 45 countries have implemented or continued to use sugar taxes to reduce consumption of sugar and associated preventable diseases such as diabetes⁷. It is widely accepted that a sugary drinks tax will almost immediately reduce

consumption and prompt manufacturers to reformulate these products by reducing the amount of sugar they contain⁸. We strongly recommend the government implements this policy.

FIRST 100 DAYS	FIRST 1000 DAYS
Instruct MoH to develop the policy and design of a sugary drinks industry levy.	Pass and implement legislation for a sugary drinks Industry levy of 20 per cent.

Priorities for prevention – investing in public health infrastructure

Ensure prevention measures address health inequity and honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Poor health outcomes that result from harmful products are experienced disproportionately in New Zealand. We need to address this inequity by applying targeted, evidence-based, and mana-enhancing prevention

measures. Health services and policies must honour and uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi, ensuring iwi and hapū can exercise tino rangatiratanga over hauora.

FIRST 100 DAYS	FIRST 1000 DAYS
Initiate consultation with Māori and Iwi providers about what they want to replace Te Aka Whai Ora with.	The Government has established a devolved Māori health service model, with health targets set by Māori, for Māori.

Protect and enhance the integrity of public policy making

Vested interests have excessive influence over public policy through lobbying – including health policy. We need to close the regulatory gaps that exist to protect the integrity of policy decision-making. Legislation is required to regulate lobbying, manage

commercial conflicts of interest, and amend the Official Information Act.

Government policy needs to be made in the interests of all New Zealanders.

FIRST 100 DAYS	FIRST 1000 DAYS
Commit to the completion of the Political Lobbying Project review, currently under way.	Implement a fit-for-purpose regulatory environment to protect the integrity of public policy making.
Commit to extend the Official Information Act to improve transparency.	

Investing in public health saves lives – and makes financial sense

Tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy foods are responsible for over 30 per cent of New Zealand’s health burden¹. Yet the Government typically allocates less than 0.5 per cent of the health budget to preventing the harm they cause⁶.

Investing in prevention will address the root causes of ill-health, save lives, increase well-being and reduce this huge pressure on health care costs.

FIRST 100 DAYS	FIRST 1000 DAYS
Commit to increase funding for all public health prevention to five per cent of the total health budget within the next term.	Public health accounts for five per cent of the baseline health budget every year.
Increase funding to prevent harm from alcohol, tobacco and unhealthy food from 0.5 to one per cent of the total public health budget.	

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All members support the mission and goals of the Health Coalition Aotearoa but maintain their independent voice on the details of recommended actions.





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