

Open letter to the incoming government

Tēnā koutou, Right Honourable Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, Honourable Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters, Honourable David Seymour, Honourable Minister of Finance Nicola Willis, and Honourable Minister of Health Dr Shane Reti,

We are organisations who care about the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders, and we are calling on you to retain New Zealand's world-leading, lifesaving Smokefree law.

The Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products (Smoked Tobacco) Amendment Act (SERPA) and the Smokefree Aotearoa Action Plan is expected to bring about rapid, massive and equitable declines in smoking rates and save thousands of lives¹.

There is no way that the Smokefree 2025 goal — a goal set by the National-led coalition in 2011 — will be achieved without this ground-breaking legislation.

We believe to repeal this Act would not just be irresponsible, it would be immoral.

Overplaying fears of increased black-market tobacco and ram raids is not based on evidence and is taken straight from the tobacco industry playbook. We think the most effective way to reduce trade in illicit tobacco and associated crime is to cut smoking prevalence to minimal levels — something this law will achieve in record time¹.

Nicola Willis further explained that keeping a higher prevalence of smoking will bring in more tax dollars². We think this rationale is heartless and indefensible.

We believe the fundamental purpose of tobacco excise tax is to promote health, not merely raise revenue. Creating future generations of New Zealanders who pay no tobacco tax because they do not smoke is a good thing, not a bad thing.

Around 4,000 to 5,000 New Zealanders die prematurely every year because they have become addicted to tobacco or have been exposed to second hand smoke and our hospitals and clinics are filled with people battling with preventable cancers, heart disease, stroke, and dozens of other diseases that smoking causes³. Our health services are already strained to the limit and the current law will substantially reduce the burden of expensive, preventable diseases. Recent modelling showed the Smokefree regulations would save \$2.3 billion (NZD) in health system costs over the next 20 years, if fully implemented.

We say the repeal of the Smokefree law is undemocratic. None of the coalition parties actively campaigned on repealing our Smokefree laws. It will be even more undemocratic if this repeal is pushed through under urgency to circumvent public comment and Select Committee scrutiny.

The tobacco industry has been very worried about New Zealand's smokefree leadership because several countries, including the UK, are already following suit with similar legislation. In our view, the deal you have sprung on the New Zealand public without debate will make the tobacco industry the biggest winner through their increased profits and clear lines of influence on public policymaking in this country.

Health Minister Dr Shane Reti will no doubt have treated people with lung cancers, heart attacks, gangrenous toes, and emphysema. He knows the statistics and the lived reality of the devastating impacts of tobacco, especially on Māori. He also knows the evidence that the measures will increase quit rates and protect children from smoking. This is why the National Party have previously supported denicotisation of cigarettes as the most effective measure in the current law.

Our children and future generations are not for sale at any price.

We, the undersigned organisations, strongly urge the Government to support the better health of New Zealanders, especially children and future generations, not the greater wealth of tobacco companies.



RETAIN THE CURRENT SMOKEFREE LAW.

ActionStation • Acupuncture New Zealand • Adolescent Health Research Group • Alcohol Action NZ Inc • Allied Health Aotearoa New Zealand • Alzheimers New Zealand • The Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers • ASPIRE Aotearoa • Asthma and Respiratory Foundation NZ • Auckland Women's Health Council • Aukati Tupeka Aotearoa • Australasian College of Emergency Medicine • Australasian Diabetes in Pregnancy Society • Australasian Sleep Association • Australasian Society of Lifestyle Medicine • Australian & New Zealand Society of Occupational Medicine Inc • Bangladesh New Zealand Friendship Society Inc • The BBM Program • CanBreathe • Cancer Society • Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand • The Cause Collective • Centre for Addiction Research • Children's Rights Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand • Christchurch Medical Students' Association • The Clinical Nutrition Association of New Zealand • Consumer NZ • Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Health Advisory Group • Department of Population Health, University of Otago Christchurch • Department of Public Health, University of Otago, Wellington • Dietitians NZ • Digital Indigenous Ltd • E Tipu e Rea Whānau Health and Social Services • Edgar Diabetes and Obesity Research, University of Otago • The Federation of Women's Health Councils • Garden to Table Trust • General Practitioners Aotearoa • Gut Cancer Foundation • Hāpai Te Hauora Tāpui Public Health Authority • The Health Consumer Advocacy Alliance Aotearoa • Health Promotion Forum of New Zealand — Runanga Whakapiki Ake i te Hauora o Aotearoa • Hei Āhuru Mōwai • Kokiri Keriana Olsen Trust • Leukaemia & Blood Cancer New Zealand • Mahitahi Hauora • Midwifery Employee Representation & Advisory Service (MERAS) • Moana Connect • Mokopuna Ora Collective • National Addiction Centre, University of Otago • National Urban Māori Authority • Neuroendocrine Cancer New Zealand • The New Zealand Association of Optometrists • New Zealand Breastfeeding Alliance • New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists • New Zealand College of Midwives • New Zealand Council of Trade Unions • New Zealand Medical Students' Association • New Zealand Nurses Organisation • The New Zealand Psychological Society Te Rōpū Mātai Hinengaro o Aotearoa • New Zealand Society for the Study of Diabetes • New Zealand Society of Anaesthetists • New Zealand Society of Diversional and Recreational Therapists Incorporated • New Zealand Society of Endocrinology • New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association • Ngā Maia Trust • NZ Women in Medicine • Osteopaths New Zealand Inc • Otago University Medical Students' Association • Paediatric Society of New Zealand/Te Kāhui Mātai Arotamariki o Aotearoa • Physiotherapy New Zealand • PodiatryNZ Incorporated • Prostate Cancer Foundation of NZ • PPTA Te Wehengarua • Public Health Association of New Zealand • Public Service Association • Qtopia • The Royal Australasian College of Physicians • The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners • School of Population Health, University of Auckland • Secondary Principals' Council of Aotearoa • Sport and Exercise Science New Zealand • Stand Up (youth union movement) • The Stroke Foundation of New Zealand • Sweet Louise • Tae Ora Tinana • Takiri Mai te Ata Whānau Ora Collective • Te Awakairangi Health Network • Te Hā Oranga • Te Hautū Kahurangi | Tertiary Education Union • Te Kāhui Manukura o Kai Ora • Te Kete Hauora o Rangitāne • Te Komiti Nui o Ngāti Whakāue • Te Ohu Pūniho Ora o Aotearoa — The New Zealand Oral Health Association • Te Oranga — Māori Medical Students Association • Te Pae Oranga o Ruahine o Tararua Charitable Trust • Te Tihi o Ruahine Whānau Ora Alliance • Te Wakahuia Manawatū Trust • Te Whānau o Waipareira Trust • The Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand • Toi Mata Hauora Association of Salaried Medical Specialists • Toi Tangata • Vape-Free Kids NZ • The Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency • Wise Group • T&T Consulting Ltd. • Kainga Aroha Community House

¹ tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/early/2023/01/10/10/2022-057655

² www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSDxETyLiBk

³ www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/health-loss-in-new-zealand-1990-2013-aug16.pdf



**Health Coalition
Aotearoa**

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