

28 May 2021

Tēnā koe me koutou mā

Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 Action Plan – comments on proposals

Healthy Families NZ is a large scale prevention initiative funded by the Ministry of Health. It brings community leadership together in a united effort for better health in the places we live, learn, work and play to prevent chronic disease.

The goal is for all New Zealanders to enjoy social and physical environments that enable healthy food and physical activity choices, being smokefree, drinking alcohol only in moderation and increasing mental health and resilience.

Lower Hutt is one of ten Healthy Families NZ communities across Aotearoa, each location experiences some of the worst health statistics in the country. Healthy Families Hutt Valley is being led by Hutt City Council.

The Healthy Families Hutt Valley Strategic Leadership Group is responsible for providing direction and leadership using and championing a systems-based approach to achieve a healthier Hutt Valley.

The Strategic Leadership Group is made up of representatives from across sectors and communities and includes the following members and organisations:

- Andrea Blackshaw, Director Neighbourhoods & Communities, Hutt City Council
- Peggy Luke-Ngaheke, Manager Waiwhetū Marae
- Marcus Sherwood, Head of Parks and Recreation, Hutt City Council
- Holona Lui, Director, Catalyst Pacific Ltd
- Phil Gibbons, Chief Executive, Sport Wellington
- Peter Kelly, Chief Executive, Upper Hutt City Council
- Dave Appleyard, Community Champion
- Bridget Allan, Chief Executive, Te Awakairangi Health Network
- Fionnagh Dougan, CE, Capital & Coast District Health Board and Hutt Valley District Health Board
- Kayne Good, Manager Learning Support, Ministry of Education
- Arawhetu Gray, Director Māori Health, Capital & Coast District Health Board and Hutt Valley District Health Board

Feedback on the proposed Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 Action Plan is written on behalf of the Strategic Leadership Group.

We are happy to provide further input and clarification on any of the points raised and would welcome the opportunity to be involved further.

The contact point for this submission is:

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Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrea Blackshaw". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andrea Blackshaw
On behalf of Healthy Families Hutt Valley Strategic Leadership Group

Smokefree Aotearoa 2025

The Healthy Families Hutt Valley Strategic Leadership Group **welcomes** and **endorses** the proposed action plan for achieving a Smokefree Aotearoa 2025.

We **congratulate** and **acknowledge** Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall on a **bold** and **innovative** approach to achieving our end game. We believe the Government is well on its way to achieving this with the Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 Action Plan.

We are **encouraged** by the actions proposed in the plan and look forward to continuing our commitment working with partners, stakeholders and the community to make Smokefree Aotearoa a reality for our people.

This world-leading all of systems approach is needed to address the conditions in which whānau live, learn, work and play to support our people to be well and thrive.

Smoking is a driver of health inequities

We must challenge the status quo and narrow our focus on addressing the inequities across the tobacco control system. For Aotearoa to reach the Smokefree 2025 goal equitably, it requires courageous and often confronting actions which address the structural, political and social dynamics underpinning the tobacco system.

It has been acknowledged that across Aotearoa, Māori women have the highest smoking rates. This is also the story locally. According to the 2018 Census, in Lower Hutt 29.8% of Māori are regular smokers and **38% of Māori women** are smoking **at the time of giving birth** in Hutt Hospital.

The inequity in health outcomes that exists for Māori and Pasifika must be addressed.

We **encourage** the Government to direct the governance of the Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 Action Plan to both the Māori Health Authority and Health New Zealand. Both authorities have an important role to play in achieving the Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 endgame.

It is **critical** that the Māori Health Authority has the mandate and commissioning powers to address the health inequities experienced by Māori.

To meet our Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations and achieve a Smokefree Aotearoa for our Māori and Pasifika people, action is needed to eliminate inequities in health. Addressing smoking is a critical aspect of improving these inequities.

We have made specific comment on the focus areas and outcomes of the proposed action plan, which are outlined below.

1. Strengthen the tobacco control system

(a) Strengthen Māori governance of the tobacco control programme

Embracing and harnessing the strong leadership of the Māori Health Authority will support the movement for a Smokefree Aotearoa. The Māori Health Strategy: He Korowai Oranga includes the aspirations for effective Māori governance of tobacco control.

(b) Support community action for a Smokefree 2025

We **strongly** support community-based initiatives and action.

The ideal model is one where there is a national level campaign combined with local investment in community led initiatives which support and align to the objectives of the national campaign.

In recent years, there has been a lack of investment in community led initiatives and often communities find it difficult to connect and resonate with a nationally targeted campaign. Provide communities the **opportunity** to address local needs and **create local solutions**.

The Hutt Valley is well on its way to being a smokefree region. Hutt City Council's Smokefree Outdoor Public Places Policy and Upper Hutt City Council's Smokefree Upper Hutt Policy are two of the most comprehensive policies across Aotearoa.

We **acknowledge** the important role of local government in adopting and implementing smokefree outdoor public places policies, alongside partners, stakeholders and community. Having dedicated investment in the implementation of the policy and embedding it as business as usual across Council is critical to the success.

We **encourage** the Government to consider the leadership role local government can play to support the delivery of the Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 action plan in their local communities.

(c) Increase research, evaluation, monitoring and reporting

We **strongly support** the continued investment in research, evaluation, monitoring and reporting. We encourage this investment to prioritise research in to the health effects from vaping and the use of e-cigarettes. More importantly, close monitoring of the long-term health effects of vaping on young people is critical.

(d) Strengthen compliance and enforcement activity

Locally, our understanding is that overall compliance with smokefree legislation is high. We acknowledge the need for future resourcing to support retailers through the process of becoming an approved specialist vape store and compliance with new regulations.

We **strongly** support further investment in managing the illicit trade of tobacco products and prefer this option over an increase of investment in compliance functions.

Tobacco products continue to be a target for criminal activity. Locally, we are aware of a number of small businesses, who are residents and members of our community, who have been targeted by thieves for their tobacco products.

2. Make smoked tobacco products less available

(a) Licence all retailers of tobacco and vaping products

We **strongly support and welcome** the move to licence all tobacco and vape retailers for the reasons outlined in the action plan. We have been supportive of this proposal for quite some time so it is promising to now see this action being proposed.

(b) Significantly reduce the number of smoked tobacco product retailers based on population size and density.

We **strongly support** a reduction in the number of tobacco retailers and encourage the Government to look at the role local government can play to support the implementation of this action in their communities.

Healthy Families Hutt Valley alongside Hutt City Council has a good gauge on tobacco retailers across the city. We **welcome** the opportunity to provide local modelling and can provide valuable insights in to how this is actioned and could be implemented in our rohe.

We encourage the Government to **act now** on this specific proposal and remove the option for progressive implementation. We need to make change immediately to ensure our people begin to see the benefit of a healthier future.

(c) Restrict sales of smoked tobacco products to a limited number of specific store types.

We **strongly support** restricting sales of tobacco products to specific stores, particularly removing the sale of tobacco from places where children are likely to go.

Currently, tobacco products are readily available for purchase from many places across our communities and our tobacco retail environment does not support people to quit smoking and remain smokefree.

There is clear evidence to suggest that young people and children who see tobacco products being sold as a normal, everyday commodity cannot make the link to the harm. By removing tobacco products from places where children are likely to go, it safeguards their future and removes the vulnerability to taking up smoking.

We **strongly support** restricting where tobacco products can be sold as well as a reduction in the number of stores selling tobacco products. At a minimum we **recommend** the removal of tobacco products from supermarkets, dairies, petrol stations and convenience stores.

(d) Introduce a smokefree generation policy

We **strongly support** the introduction of a smokefree generation policy. It is bold and challenges the status quo.

We **applaud** the Government for thinking of how this action may impact tobacco retailers, many of who are small business owners in our community. We offer our support to engage with local retailers to gather their insights on the proposed action.

3. Make smoked tobacco products less addictive and less appealing

We **support** any action to make tobacco products less addictive and less appealing.

We **encourage** continued conversations with smoking cessation providers and healthcare workers on the frontline who will see the potential impacts of reduced nicotine levels on current smokers, for example an increase of smoking by current smokers and increased stressed levels.

It is **important** that all actions are implemented with appropriate and effective support to quit smoking.

4. Make tobacco products less affordable

We are **concerned** about the inequity that exists when tobacco is made less affordable for some of the population.

We **welcome** the prospect of further investment in engaging with Māori and Pasifika to hear their voice on what would support them to quit smoking and how we can enable the whole whānau to thrive. Once other social factors and conditions are addressed people are in a better position to begin their journey to quit smoking, and this will have an impact on future generations.

(a) Set a minimum price for tobacco

We **agree** with the proposal to set a minimum price for tobacco products because in our experience, tobacco retailers and the tobacco industry absorb the retail margin of tobacco products.

5. Enhance existing initiatives

(a) Increase investment in mass and social media campaigns

We **strongly support** an increase in investment in stop smoking services at a local level. Our services providing support in our community know our people the best.

We **strongly** encourage local solutions addressing local needs.

Mass social media campaigns at a national level are a business as usual approach. We encourage **rethinking the status quo** and exploring other avenues and initiatives for reaching our priority populations at a local level.

(b) Increase investment in stop smoking services for priority populations

We strongly support an increase in investment for local stop smoking services to reach our priority communities.

We **encourage** the Government to engage further with local Māori and Pasifika stop smoking providers to gain a better understanding of what the local needs are and develop solutions together that are beyond business as usual.

We **strongly support** and encourage a **new way of thinking** to test and challenge traditional methods.

We **support** the recommendation that explores better smoking cessation support to prisoners, and would like to encourage the Government to ensure stop smoking support is provided beyond the prison gates and encompasses prisoner reintegration back into their whānau and community.

Key recommendations

1. Governance of the Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 Action Plan sits with the Māori Health Authority and Health New Zealand. Harnessing the strong leadership by the Māori Health Authority supports the movement for a Smokefree Aotearoa 2025.
2. Continue to challenge traditional approaches and move beyond a business as usual approach to achieve a Smokefree Aotearoa 2025. A world-leading all of systems approach is needed to address the conditions in which whānau live, learn, work and play to support our people to be well and thrive.
3. Provide communities with the opportunity to address local needs and create local solutions.
4. Continued investment in research and monitoring of the use of e-cigarettes, with a particular focus on monitoring and research in to the health effects of vaping on young people.
5. Explore the role of local government in the delivery of the action plan.
6. Increase investment in stop smoking services at a local level and test a new way of thinking which challenges traditional methods to get our people to stop smoking.
7. Consider the exit strategy from vaping so our people can lead smokefree and vapefree lives.

We **welcome** the opportunity to have further conversations on the role we can play to support the implementation and delivery of the Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 Action Plan.

The time for action is now. The ultimate goal is a smokefree and vapefree Aotearoa New Zealand. Let's achieve our end game.