



nzmsa

New Zealand Medical Students' Association

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Monday 04 December 2023

Tēnā koutou Rt. Hon. Christopher Luxon, Hon. Shane Reti, Hon. Casey Costello and Hon. Matthew Doocey,

We are the New Zealand Medical Students' Association (NZMSA). We represent and advocate for taurira rata across the motu alongside the national Māori medical student body, Te Oranga, and our regional medical student associations. We write this letter on behalf of this collective of medical taurira to formally call for the coalition government to place the health of Aotearoa above financial motivations and not repeal the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products (Smoked Tobacco) Amendment Act 2022 (SERPA) and the Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 Action Plan.

We urge the coalition government to:

- reaffirm their support for the Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 Action Plan;
- not repeal recent amendments to the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products Act 1990, and;
- outline their commitment to the health of whānau Māori and other communities disproportionately affected by smoking and its associated harms.

We are the future of the Aotearoa medical workforce. We aspire to serve a nation that places the health of all peoples, especially Māori and our most vulnerable communities, at the forefront of policy and legislation. We are disappointed to hear of the proposed repeal of Smokefree legislation and believe this action diminishes our aspirations and our professional obligations of non-maleficence. We urge the Government to reconsider their stance and to enable these effective public health measures to continue, for the benefit of future New Zealand generations.

Smoking presents a significant burden to the health of active smokers by increasing risk of lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and cardiovascular disease,¹ reducing lifespan by ten years² and costing the health system \$1.7 billion per year (as estimated in 2005).³ Smoking disproportionately affects Māori communities and contributes to systemic issues such as poverty, homelessness and preventable deaths.⁴ Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 legislation has actively reduced rates of smoking to a historic low of 8% within the general population, including Māori and Pacific communities.⁵ We must continue to protect our future tamariki from the harmful effects of smoking, and we are concerned that the repeal of Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 will exhaust this critical opportunity. The Smokefree legislation is working, and by repealing it, we may lose the momentum built over decades.

We support SERPA and the Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 Action Plan because it relieves the burden of preventable disease and hospital admissions, of which smoking is the largest contributor.⁶ We believe the coalition government supports this aspiration, given their intent to establish five health goals including improving wait times and cancer treatments. Smokefree legislation enables the fulfilment of these goals, and allows the government to protect and care for all New Zealanders, as is their charge. We urge the coalition government to reaffirm their commitment to the health of New Zealanders, and to provide transparency on how they will do so.

We request a response and an audience with Rt. Hon. Christopher Luxon, Hon. Shane Reti, Hon. Casey Costello and Hon. Matthew Doocey to discuss with the NZMSA collective about the implications this political move has on the future health system of Aotearoa.

Ngā mihi nui,

Indira Fernando

President

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On behalf of the New Zealand medical students' associations and rōpū; signatures on page over.

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