



MEDIA RELEASE

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Researchers welcome Smokefree 2025 Action Plan

Researchers from the University of Otago's ASPIRE 2025 Research Centre, which carries out research to support the Smokefree 2025 goal, have welcomed and endorsed the action plan for achieving a Smokefree Aotearoa by 2025 released by Associate Health Minister Dr Ayesha Verrall today.

Co-director of the ASPIRE 2025 Centre, Professor Janet Hoek said:

"We would like to congratulate Minister Verrall on publishing such a bold, innovative, and comprehensive action plan, and we congratulate the Government for delivering on the Manifesto promise to prioritise development of this plan".

The researchers noted the plan includes world-leading proposals to reduce the supply of tobacco products, and decrease their appeal and addictiveness, issues previously unaddressed in New Zealand.

The plan also includes specific measures likely to greatly reduce uptake of smoking among young people and address the enormous environmental impact of discarded cigarette butts. The researchers applaud the plan's emphasis on strengthening the tobacco control system to ensure greater Māori control, and its improved focus on research, monitoring and evaluation.

ASPIRE 2025 co-director, Andrew Waa, emphasised that the action plan finally addresses key recommendations made in the 2010 Māori Affairs Select Committee report from its Inquiry into the tobacco industry in Aotearoa and the consequences of tobacco use for Māori. This report prompted the Government to adopt the Smokefree 2025 goal in 2011. He stated:

"This action plan at last sets out a realistic approach to meet the desire of Māori communities and leaders to eliminate the availability of tobacco products in Aotearoa and end the terrible health impacts they have on Māori."

Professor Richard Edwards commented:

"This plan is a landmark for public health intervention and re-establishes New Zealand as a global leader in tackling the smoking epidemic. If implemented in full, it provides a realistic prospect that New Zealand could be the first country in the world to virtually eliminate tobacco smoking, and to do so equitably for all population groups."

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