

MEDIA RELEASE

The Public Health Association

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For immediate release

Tobacco price increase a welcome support for Māori smoking reduction

The Public Health Association (PHA) welcomes new legislation passed last night stepping rises in tobacco excise tax over the next two years.

The PHA called for significant tax increases in its recent submission to the Māori Affairs Select Committee's inquiry into the impact of smoking on Māori, and PHA Senior Policy Analyst for Māori Public Health Keriata Stuart says the legislation is a positive step for Māori smokefree initiatives.

"We know most Māori smokers say they want to give up smoking," Ms Stuart said.

"Even though the increase will have some impact on low-income smokers, many Māori smokers support tax increases as a motivator."

The PHA says that Tariana Turia deserves congratulations for championing this move.

"We agree with Minister Turia's view that while the increases announced are lower than ideal, it is a good start. Continued tax increases will send a strong signal," Ms Stuart said.

The PHA also welcomes the long overdue move to harmonise taxes on loose tobacco and cigarettes. However, Ms Stuart says the excise tax should not just go into government coffers.

"The extra tax should be dedicated to increasing cessation services for Māori, and social marketing to further encourage quit attempts.

"It allows government to fund new initiatives without taking money from existing smokefree services.

"This is an excellent start on the journey to reduce the toll that smoking has on Māori and on New Zealand as whole."

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