

Aide-Mémoire

Talking points for the oral update to Cabinet on a proposed Communications Strategy: Getting to Smokefree 2025

Date due to MO:	19 January 2023	Action required by:	N/A
Security level:	IN CONFIDENCE	Health Report number:	H2024034972
To:	Hon Casey Costello, Associate Minister of Health		

Contact for telephone discussion

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Aide-Mémoire

Talking points for the oral update to Cabinet on a proposed Communications Strategy: Getting to Smokefree 2025

Date due: 19 January 2023

To: Hon Casey Costello, Associate Minister of Health

Security level: IN CONFIDENCE **Health Report number:** H2024034972

Details of meeting: 23 January 2023

Cabinet Committee: 100-Day Cabinet Committee (Health)

Purpose of meeting/proposal: You are updating Cabinet on a proposed communications strategy regarding repeal of amendments to the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products Act 1990 and associated regulations, and achieving New Zealand's Smokefree 2025 goal.

Comment This aide-mémoire provides talking points to support you taking an oral item to the 100-Day Cabinet Committee (Health) on a proposed communications strategy as agreed by Cabinet on 18 December 2023.

This aide-mémoire discloses all relevant information.



Jane Chambers

Group Manager, Public Health Policy and Regulation

Public Health Agency | Te Pou Hauora Tūmatanui

Talking points on proposed Communications Strategy: Getting to Smokefree 2025

Background

- The Government's 100-Day Plan includes a commitment to repeal amendments to the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products Act 1990 and regulations.
- Cabinet met on 18 December 2023 [CAB-23-MIN-0500 refers] and agreed to amend the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products Act 1990 (and related regulations) to remove the changes provided for in the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products (Smoked Tobacco) Amendment Act 2022 (the Amendment Act) relating to:
 - the reduction in retail outlets able to sell smoked tobacco products,
 - denicotinisation, and
 - the smokefree generation policy.
- No public announcements on the above decisions have been made.
- Cabinet also noted that you will report back to Cabinet in January 2024 with a proposed communications strategy.
- You are due to report back to Cabinet before 8 March 2024 on further changes to strengthen regulation of vaping and other nicotine products, which the proposed communications strategy can assist with.

Key points

- The Ministry has prepared a **Draft communications strategy: Getting to Smokefree 2025** (attached as appendix 1).
- The proposed communications strategy (the strategy) will be a living document with up-to-date information to share with stakeholders during key milestones as changes are announced and implemented in 2024.
- The strategy highlights current issues and risks, key messages, and the need for a proactive and strategic approach to communicating with stakeholders. Use of various platforms and mediums of communication are identified.
- There are some areas where we will need to work with your office to refine messaging once further decisions have been made.
- Your report back to Cabinet in early March 2024 on further suggested changes to strengthen regulation of vaping and other nicotine products is an opportunity to make an announcement and communicate the wider approach.

Next steps

- Your office to advise on any immediate updates required to the attached Draft communications strategy: Getting to Smokefree 2025.

Talking points

Overview

- The Government remains committed to lowering smoking rates, and the Smokefree 2025 goal, as well as continuation of existing supports for people who wish to quit smoking.

- On 24 November 2023, the Government announced plans to amend the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products Act 1990 to remove changes provided for in the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products (Smoked Tobacco) Amendment Act 2022 relating to:
 - the reduction in retail outlets able to sell smoked tobacco products,
 - denicotinisation, and
 - the smokefree generation policy.
- On 18 December 2023, Cabinet agreed to the above changes. No public announcements have been made.
- Cabinet also asked me to report back in January 2024 with a proposed communications strategy.
- Officials have provided me with a draft communications strategy: Getting to Smokefree 2025.

Proposed communications strategy: Getting to Smokefree 2025

- The draft communications strategy looks ahead to opportunities for proactive communications in 2024.
- It is a living document and will be regularly updated.
- It highlights the current issues and risks, key messages, and outlines a proactive and strategic approach to communicating with stakeholders impacted by smoked tobacco.
- The strategy identifies key stakeholders and outlines how communications may need to be tailored to be best received by each. For example, retail and industry stakeholders will require specific information about refunds to the smoked tobacco retail scheme.
- The Ministry of Health will continue to work closely with Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora, and Te Aka Whai Ora | Māori Health Authority, to align messaging and identify proactive opportunities.
- Health New Zealand and Te Aka Whai Ora are already running public campaigns and promotions focusing on addressing the harms of smoking and vaping. These include [Breakfree to Smokefree](#) and [Protect Your Breath](#). The strategy will promote and highlight messaging from these campaigns.
- The report back to Cabinet by early March 2024 on further changes to strengthen regulation of vaping and other nicotine products is an opportunity to make an announcement and confirm the Government's approach to achieving Smokefree 2025. The nature of any announcements, and our updated messaging, will depend on Government decisions.
- Finally, the strategy sets out core key messages (provided below).

Core key messages

- The Government remains committed to further reducing smoking rates and achieving the Smokefree 2025 goal of daily smoking prevalence of less than 5% for all population groups.

- New Zealand has seen some of the largest drops in smoking rates across the world in recent years.
- The latest New Zealand Health Survey results showed that 6.8% of New Zealanders are smoking daily, down from 8.6% the previous year, and 16.4% in 2011/12.
- Despite smoking rates having reduced for all groups of New Zealanders, daily smoking rates for Māori, low-income earners, adults with disabilities, and people experiencing mental health and addiction issues remain higher than others.
- The Government is supporting a package of current and new initiatives to ensure we reach Smokefree 2025 goal such as:
 - effective stop smoking services
 - stop smoking and vaping social marketing campaigns.
- A key strategy to achieving Smokefree 2025 is ensuring that people who smoke have access to less harmful regulated products, such as vape products, which will help them to quit smoking. Vaping is significantly less harmful than smoking.
- This will be balanced by better protecting young people from vaping harm. There has been a significant increase in the number of young people vaping which is a major concern in our communities.
- The Government will continue to ensure that all tobacco control initiatives focus on those who need them the most and take a closer look at options to strengthen enforcement of tobacco and vaping products to ensure the protection of young people. Officials will be providing advice on this.
- The Government does not support the previous Government's new measures to regulate smoked tobacco. This is why the Government is repealing those measures in early 2024 as part of the Coalition Government's 100-day plan.

Appendix 1:

Draft communications strategy - Getting to Smokefree 2025

Purpose

- This is a live document which provides a current overview of the communications approach for Smokefree 2025.
- It highlights the current issues and risks, the core key messaging, and proactive and strategic approach to communicating with stakeholders impacted by smoked tobacco and other regulated products.
- In terms of proactive opportunities, these are largely dependent on Government decisions and subsequent announcements.

Background

- The Coalition Government remains committed to lowering smoking rates and the Smokefree 2025 goal and is committed to the existing supports available for smokers to quit smoking.
- On 24 November 2023, the Coalition Government announced plans to amend the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products Act 1990 to remove changes provided for in the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products (Smoked Tobacco) Amendment Act 2022 – the smokefree generation ban, low nicotine cigarettes and retail reduction scheme.
- On 18 December 2023, Cabinet agreed to the above changes. No public announcements were made.
- Cabinet also agreed that the Associate Minister of Health would report back in January 2024 with a proposed communications strategy.
- This draft communications strategy identifies possible opportunities for proactive communications in 2024. It will be updated regularly.
- The Associate Minister of Health is also expected to report back to Cabinet by early March 2024 on further changes to strengthen regulation of vaping and other nicotine products. This is an opportunity to make an announcement and tell a wider narrative about the Government's commitment to Smokefree 2025.

Communication and engagement approach

- We know who our stakeholders are, and they understand what's happening.
- We will support Ministers with their communications.

- We will be open and transparent and communicate with stakeholders proactively and early, building trust and confidence to the extent possible.
- We will mitigate risks as appropriate, taking a proactive approach.
- We will support key influencers to cascade timely, accurate, accessible messages to relevant stakeholders.

Strategic and proactive approach

- A strategic and proactive approach is needed to more clearly articulate the Coalition Government's Smokefree narrative – specifically its support for the status quo measures, further reducing smoking rates, and the continuation of current educational and quit support programmes.
- The Ministry of Health (the Ministry) will continue to work closely with Health New Zealand, and the Māori Health Authority. This includes ensuring message alignment and identifying and promoting proactive opportunities to highlight that messaging. Health New Zealand and the Māori Health Authority are already running public campaigns and promotions focusing on addressing the harms of smoking and vaping. These include Breakfree to Smokefree and Protect Your Breath.
- A more proactive communications approach to compliance is also being adopted to highlight the work underway in this area. A separate communications plan is being developed by the Ministry, including a new regular stakeholder newsletter.
- Pending Cabinet decisions in early March 2024, there will likely be an opportunity for proactive communications on further changes to strengthen regulation of vaping and other nicotine regulated products.

Recent communication issues/risks and mitigation

- Health sector, academic and broader criticism of the Coalition Government's decision to repeal the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products (Smoked Tobacco) Amendment Act 2022 has attracted extensive media coverage.
- **Risk:** It is possible that proactive opportunities to tell the Government's narrative will be overshadowed by critical commentary. **Mitigation:** Clear and simple messaging will be required, to be repeated over time. It is important to identify proactive opportunities.
- **Risk:** There is the potential for further criticism around Waitangi Day. **Mitigation:** Use agreed messaging.
- **Risk:** There is the potential for an information void between now and any possible announcements. **Mitigation:** Be active in promoting accurate information consistent with the Government's agreed messaging and counter directly, as appropriate.

- **Risk:** Clarity is needed for stakeholders on what is/is not being repealed in the legislation. **Mitigation:** The Cabinet paper could be proactively released to mitigate this. Proactive messaging can also be used and promoted through appropriate channels.
- **Risk:** Misleading or inaccurate information could be disseminated. **Mitigation:** Be active in promoting accurate information consistent with the Government's agreed messaging and counter directly, as appropriate.
- **Risk:** Clarity is also needed for retailers who applied to the scheme and when they will receive a refund. **Mitigation:** Proactive and timely communications to retailers when legislation is introduced and passed.

Key stakeholders

- **Smokers** – people who smoke need to know that the legislative changes are not happening, and they are provided with supports to quit if needed.
- **Retailers/industry** – particularly those who need to be informed about refunds to the smoked tobacco retail scheme applications and any ongoing legislative requirements that are not being removed.
- **Māori** – have the highest rates of smoking and need tailored messaging and engagement.
- **Pacific peoples** – have high rates of smoking and need tailored messaging and engagement.
- **General public** – need to be well informed and confident that work is underway to reduce smoking rates.
- **Smokefree Enforcement Officers** – need to be well informed.
- **Providers** – need to be well informed so they can provide appropriate advice to people.
- **Health sector** - need to be well informed so they can provide appropriate advice to people.
- **Experts and academics** - need to be well informed so they can provide appropriate advice or public comment.

Channels

- Ministry media releases / news items.
- Ministerial media releases.
- Social media.
- Ministry website updates.
- Potential media interviews.

- Ministry of Health stakeholder newsletter (Tobacco Regulatory Authority or Vaping Regulatory Authority).
- Health New Zealand channels tbc.

Communications timeline

- **Waitangi Day** – potential for further criticism of the Government’s position. Use agreed messaging.
- **Mid/late February** – legislation is introduced tbc. PR opportunity to tell the Government’s narrative and front foot the messaging.
- **February** - digital marketing activity goes live for the Breakfree to Smokefree campaign, with a TV ad booked from 18 February.
- **Early March** – legislation is passed tbc. Opportunity to tell the Government’s narrative.
- **Early March** – Minister to report back to Cabinet on further changes to strengthen regulation. Opportunity to tie in with the above tbc.
- **2024** - Protect Your Breath activities tbc.

Key messages

- The Government remains committed to further reducing smoking rates, and achieving the Smokefree 2025 goal of daily smoking prevalence of less than 5% for all population groups.
- New Zealand has seen some of the largest drops in smoking rates across the world in recent years.
- The latest New Zealand Health Survey results showed that 6.8% of New Zealanders are smoking daily, down from 8.6% the previous year, and 16.4% in 2011/12.
- Despite smoking rates having reduced for all groups of New Zealanders, daily smoking rates for Māori, low-income earners, adults with disabilities, and people experiencing mental health and addiction issues remain higher than others.
- The Government is supporting a package of current and new initiatives to ensure we reach the Smokefree 2025 goal such as:
 - effective stop smoking services
 - stop smoking and vaping social marketing campaigns.
- The Government will continue to ensure that all tobacco control initiatives focus on those who need them the most.

- A key strategy to achieving Smokefree 2025 is ensuring that people who smoke have access to less harmful regulated products, such as vape products, which will help them to quit smoking. Vaping is significantly less harmful than smoking.
- This will be balanced by better protecting young people from vaping harm. There has been a significant increase in the number of young people vaping which is a major concern in our communities.
- The Government does not support the previous Government's new measures to regulate smoked tobacco. This is why the Government is repealing those measures in early 2024 as part of the Coalition Government's 100-day plan.

Health New Zealand messages

- Breakfree to Smokefree, launched on World Smokefree Day, 31 May 2023 - is a behaviour-change marketing campaign to support the Smokefree 2025 goal and encourage more quit attempts, with a focus on youth audiences with high smoking rates.
- The campaign was developed through a collaborative co-design process, with young Māori and Pacific voices steering the mahi.
- The Breakfree to Smokefree campaign will accelerate progress towards a smokefree future and tackle the harm that smoked tobacco products cause. Early results of actions taken such as clicking through to Quitline, a Quit Coach or the Vaping Facts website show strong results. Campaign metrics include:
 - 213 people have registered with a quit coach through the Breakfree to Smokefree website
 - 503 people have registered with Quit line through the Breakfree to Smokefree website
 - 875 have clicked through to Vaping Facts.
- Six new community activators have been funded to support and promote smokefree activities and smokefree activation grants are being administered to community groups. The full-time activators, that include Māori and Pacific peoples, assist the local community with events that support the Smokefree goal.
- Stop smoking services support people who want to quit smoking or switch to less harmful alternatives by providing free behavioural support and free nicotine replacement therapy.
 - A total of \$13.875 million in Budget 2021 funding was committed to scaling up stop smoking services over three years from July 2022.
 - An additional \$8 million of Budget 2021 funding was committed to be invested directly with Pacific health providers over four years so they can tailor stop smoking services for Pacific communities.

- As part of the Smokefree Action Plan, additional funding was allocated to existing Māori providers and to scale up current stop smoking services. These primarily focus on increasing Māori smokefree practitioners and services to hapū wāhine and Māori.

Compliance messages

- Health New Zealand and the Ministry of Health support the Director-General of Health in enforcing the Act. These entities are working together to increase compliance. This is to ensure the industry is following the law.
- We will take a risk-based and proportionate approach by considering what levers are most effective in reducing risk and harm. In doing so, we encourage voluntary compliance, deter non-compliance, and hold people to account when breaches occur.
- That is why our first step is to undertake compliance visits and carry out Controlled Purchase Operations (CPOs).
- We will focus on proactive compliance activity in our communities most impacted by smoking. There is a particular focus on ensuring that protections in the legislation for children and young people are effectively implemented and enforced.
- As part of our risk-based and proportionate approach, retailers displaying a pattern of risky and reckless behaviour will attract greater regulatory scrutiny.
- If people/communities are aware of any breaches of the Act, particularly if specific stores are selling vaping or tobacco products to minors, we encourage them to notify their local Smokefree Enforcement Officers in the National Public Health Service. Specific information for each region can be found in the following link:
<https://www.tewhatoru.govt.nz/our-health-system/health-sector-organisations/public-health-contacts/>

Q&A

Why scrap the measures to reduce the number of retailers, reduce the nicotine level and ban selling cigarettes to anyone born on/after 1/1/09?

- We do not support the previous Government's measures to regulate tobacco. This is why we are repealing them in early 2024 as part of the Government's 100-day plan.
- We are focusing on providing people with practical tools and supports to help them to quit.

What happens to the pause on the smoked tobacco retail scheme?

- The scheme remains paused. Applicants who paid the application fee will receive a full refund in due course.

Are there budget savings at the Ministry as a result of the repeal of legislation?

- Budget savings are to be confirmed, however we are likely to need fewer people as a result of the changes.

Is New Zealand likely to reach the 5% 2025 smokefree goal?

- s 9(2)(g)(i) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- We remain committed to the Smokefree goal for all groups and are looking at ways of strengthening practical tools and supports to help smokers to quit.

PROACTIVELY RELEASED