

Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 Action Plan

What it means for retailers

The Government is committed to ending the harm caused by smoked tobacco products, such as cigarettes and roll-your-owns.

While smoking rates are dropping, there's a lot more work to be done if we want to achieve our goal by 2025. One single intervention won't get us there – we need a multi-faceted approach.

Key to this is regulating the tobacco retail environment.

If you're a retailer, we're making changes that will impact you – here's what you need to know.

Changes to retail

One of the key changes the Government is making is to reduce the number of retailers who can sell smoked tobacco products.

In future, all retailers will need to be approved to sell smoked tobacco products. This includes current retailers (including online retailers) of smoked tobacco products.

A clear approval process will be decided that gives the Director-General of Health the authority to approve a limited number of retailers. We don't have a final number yet, but we expect only a small number of the 5,000 – 8,000 current retailers will be approved to sell smoked tobacco products.

The approval process will take into account a number of factors, including the location and suitability of a retail outlet. We want to strike a balance between removing smoked tobacco products from most stores to prevent impulse purchases while allowing reasonable access for people who don't stop smoking.

When the action plan takes effect, it will be an offence to sell smoked tobacco products without the approval of the Director-General of Health.

Support for impacted retailers

Some evidence suggests that tobacco and its associated footfall represents only a small percentage of many retailers' profits. We also know that the volume of tobacco sold in Aotearoa New Zealand has already been declining – in some cases, it has been replaced by vaping products.

We recognise that some retailers who are currently selling smoked tobacco products may be impacted by the changes listed in the action plan. However, any potential impact to business is outweighed by the reduction in harm and loss of life caused to communities and whānau by smoking. The lives and wellbeing of New Zealanders must always come first.

We are considering what non-financial support may be appropriate for any retailers who are not approved by the Director-General of Health.



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
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When the changes will take effect

We need new legislation to implement this change.

You will have an opportunity to give your input to the retail model set out in legislation when it is being considered by the select committee, which is likely to be in mid-late 2022. You will also be able to comment on any additional detail that will be set out in regulations. This consultation will likely take place in the first half of 2023.

Once the proposed legislative changes have been made to the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products Act 1990, there will be a process for retailers to indicate their interest in applying to continue selling smoked tobacco products.

Retailers that continue to sell smoked tobacco will need to develop new processes and procedures to ensure they comply with the additional requirements proposed under the law. For example, they will need to make sure that they only sell smoked tobacco products that meet low nicotine requirements once these have been implemented.

We're also creating a 'smokefree generation'. This means that, once the law changes, it won't be legal to sell smoked tobacco products to people born after a certain date.

The sale of vaping products

We are not limiting the number of shops that can sell vaping or heated tobacco products.

We already require retailers who wish to be a Specialist Vape Retailer (SVR) to apply to the Director-General of Health for approval. We are extending a requirement for all retailers to let us know that they are selling vaping products, including heated tobacco. This will help us understand who is selling these products so we can be sure everyone complies with the smoked tobacco products rules.

We will provide more information closer to the time the changes will be made. For updates, sign up to our Smokefree 2025 newsletter on the Ministry of Health website at: health.govt.nz/our-work/preventative-health-wellness/tobacco-control/smokefree-aotearoa-2025/smokefree-2025-newsletter

For more information, visit the Smokefree webpage on the Ministry of Health website at: health.govt.nz/smokefree2025