

WHAKAHĀ O TE PĀ HARAKEKE

REALISING THE VISION FOR A SMOKEFREE FUTURE

Our first newsletter for Whakahā o te Pā Harakeke is a celebration of many achievements since the programme began. We have brought projects back on track after a rather turbulent 16 months in the wake of COVID-19, responded to ambitious and visionary Government proposals for a smokefree Aotearoa 2025 action plan, and have held our first annual research group and National Reference Group meetings. As we write, we have moved back to Alert Level 4 as COVID-19 has returned to our community; we hope you are all safe and well, and that we will soon be meeting again in person.

The Whakahā o Te Pā Harakeke programme is conceptualised around a whariki, created from three whenu that comprise strands of related projects that are interwoven with miro, which represent our overarching themes. Our miro detail our shared commitment to reducing health inequities, which we will achieve by developing evidence to reduce smoking prevalence among priority groups, and promoting the achievement of Smokefree Aotearoa for all peoples in New Zealand.



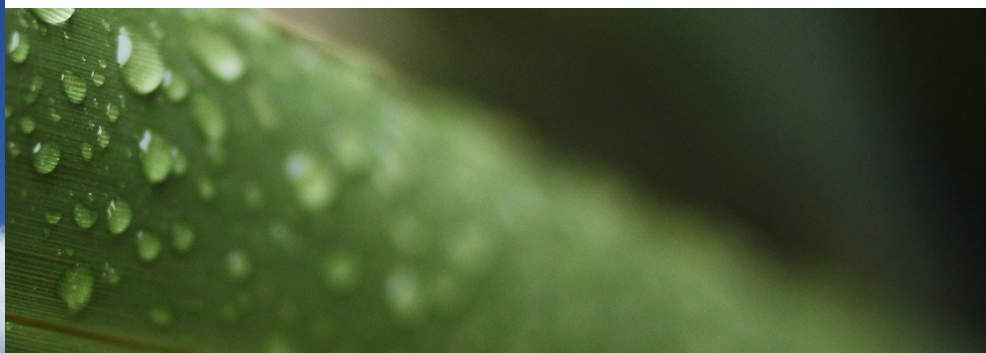
WHENU HIGHLIGHTS

WHENU 1

Evidence for smokefree interventions, equity and endgames

The EASE project is now well underway. Wave 3 data collection was completed in February 2021 and the initial dataset is available. We have also just completed the first shorter interim survey (W3.5). We are currently planning outputs for the W3 survey; these will be informed by a preliminary analysis of the data, once the weighting has been completed by the team at University of Waterloo. The data has already been used to inform advocacy in support of the action plan proposals (see this [blog](#)). Priorities for the next 12 months are (i) to prepare the dataset and initial analysis of the W3.5 survey, (ii) develop the questionnaire and protocol for W4 (taking into account the innovative policies proposed in the new Action Plan), and carry out data collection (Feb-Apr 2022), (iii) prepare and disseminate outputs from the W3 survey.

INSPIRED: This project has been inactive, but we plan to re-initiate it by preparing outputs from the baseline data and plan for a follow-up data collection. The initial priority is to recruit a dedicated research fellow to support the rejuvenation of the project and collaborative network.





WHENU HIGHLIGHTS continued

WHENU 2

Reducing the appeal, availability and accessibility of tobacco

The last year has been very busy in Whenu rua and we have picked up pace thanks to very hard work from everyone. We have completed Study 2.5, which used in-depth interviews to explore factors triggering a return to smoking after a sustained period of exclusive vaping. Dr Lindsay Robertson led this study, and an MS and conference abstract are now under review. We have also made good progress on Study 2.1, which Lizzie Strickett of Hāpai is leading. Lizzie is using whānau interviews to probe how people with lived experiences of smoking perceive recent smokefree policies and new measures outlined in the Smokefree Action Plan proposals.

We have initiated work on two other projects. First, Study 2.3, which examines how social supply of tobacco occurs among young people. We have developed and consulted on a study protocol, and obtained Category A ethics approval. We've also welcomed Associate Professor Patrick Vakaoti to the research team. Second, Study 2.2, which will examine tobacco retailing, is in development. We are bringing this work forward to gather data that could inform implementation of strategies we hope will be outlined in the Action Plan. Following discussion with the partners and our reference group, we are proposing to change study 2.4, which originally proposed exploring alcohol and smoking, to focus instead on very low nicotine cigarettes.

WHENU 3

Evidence to Action

Sixteen stakeholder interviews have been completed to date, indicating a broad range of perspectives on the tobacco system and factors that influence how tobacco is made available.

Achievements

Warm congratulations to Associate Professor El-Shadan Tautolo, who received \$1.2 million from the HRC for his new project: *Pacific Islands Families: Thriving Pacific Young Adults (PIF: TPYA)*. Dan's project will involve interviews with Pacific youth to explore how cultural identity, family environments and employment affect their mental health. The study will use knowledge of young people's experiences to identify how mental health services can be improved for Pacific youth. See more information on Dan's exciting new project [here](#).

Welcome to new team members

We welcome Associate Professor Patrick Vakaoti, who is joining the research team in Whenu Rua to contribute to our project exploring social supply of tobacco among young people. Patrick is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Otago and has a particular interest in community development work with young people. He has undertaken research in Fiji and the wider Pacific region to explore street-frequenting and political participation among young people. His work supports indigenous community development and he has worked with UNICEF Pacific and the Pacific Leadership Programme (DFAT).

Recent publications

Barbalich, Gartner, Edwards, Hoek J. (in press). New Zealand smokers' perceptions of tobacco endgame measures: A qualitative analysis. *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*

Edwards R, Stanley J, Johnson E, Waa AM, Ouimet J, Fong GT. (in press). Support for New Zealand's Smokefree 2025 goal and key measures to achieve it: Findings from the ITC New Zealand Survey. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*.

Hoek J, Barbalich I, Gartner C, Edwards R. A qualitative analysis of how people who smoke and manage lower incomes perceive the Smokefree 2025 Goal. *New Zealand Medical Journal*. 134(1535):70-74.

Summer studentships

The Summer Studentships research programme is a great way for undergraduate students to gain an insight into research and improve their skills in an area of interest. Over the 2020/2021 period we had three students working on a range of projects.

IVANA BARBALICH interviewed people who smoke and experience high deprivation about their perceptions of the SF2025 goal and views on possible endgame measures. Research letter published and full study manuscript is forthcoming at *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*.

ELLE LEE conducted an analysis of Twitter data about World Vape Day. A paper has been submitted.

LATHAN THOMAS used YIS data to look at the impact of plain packaging. Data was collected straight after plain packs were introduced; the analysis is close to completion.

2021/2022 Studentships

Projects under development:

- Exploring social supply among Pacific young people
- An exploration of how young people interpret the smokefree generation proposal
- Exploring the impact of greatly reduced tobacco availability on people who smoke

SPOTLIGHT | Eliminating smoking disparities for Māori

Whakahā Co-Director Anaru Waa, together with the Chair of our National Reference Group Dr Heather Gifford (Whakauae Research), and widely-respected smokefree leader, Shane Kawenata Bradbrook, recently led an important blog examining how the Smokefree Action Plan could eliminate smoking disparities for Māori. The authors note the importance of the Action Plan's focus on supportive environments rather than individual measures and explain the strong alignment Māori leadership in promoting a kaupapa Tupeka Kore. They also outline strong support among Māori who smoke for reducing nicotine levels in cigarettes and greatly reducing the availability of tobacco. Most fundamentally, they applaud the Action Plan's commitment to strengthening Māori governance and explain how Māori interests, aspirations and perspectives must be at the heart of decisions about how smokefree measures are designed, implemented and evaluated.

Waa A, Gifford H, Bradbrook S. A [Smokefree Aotearoa Action Plan: Why this could eliminate smoking disparities for Māori](#). Public Health Expert, May 28, 2021.

To sign up for [Public Health Expert](#) blogs, please go to the top left of the blog and add your email, then click "subscribe".

Upcoming Events

WEBINARS:

Early Sep 21: Smoking in NZ Pacific adolescents & implications for the Smokefree2025 action plan. This postponed event will be rescheduled soon. This webinar will launch the jointly published ASPIRE and ASH report on smoking among Pacific adolescents. We look forward to having you join us when Associate Professor El Shadan Tautolo (AUT), Associate Professor Collin Tukuitonga, Stephanie Erick and Lealailepule Edward Cowley discuss the implications of the report findings, and their hopes and priorities for NZ's Smokefree2025 Action Plan which is currently being developed.

Early Oct 21: We are thrilled to welcome Professor Bonnie Halpern-Felsher, who is a Professor of Pediatrics at Stanford University. Bonnie will be talking about the tobacco prevention toolkit she has developed for adolescents, particularly her work in supporting young people to quit vaping. We'll be setting the date and circulating a flier in the next few weeks so please watch this space!