



December 12, 2023

The Right Honourable Christopher Luxon, Prime Minister of New Zealand

RE: Aotearoa/New Zealand Tobacco Action Plan

Dear Prime Minister Luxon,

We are writing on behalf of the International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer (IASLC), an organization with a substantial global membership that is dedicated to the prevention and treatment of lung cancer. We urge you to reconsider your government's plan to rescind the Aotearoa/New Zealand Tobacco Action Plan legislation. The laws that New Zealand has in place are a model for the world and will prevent many lung cancer cases and deaths that would otherwise occur as a result of smoking. Removing the existing laws for political pragmatism will lead to more lung cancers, as well as many other tobacco related illnesses, resulting in increased healthcare costs and the deaths of more New Zealanders, especially amongst the Māori population (please see graphs in Annex).

As global thoracic cancer providers from multiple disciplines, we see the devastating impact of smoking every day. Nicotine is among the most addictive chemicals known, greater than heroin or cocaine. The amount of nicotine in tobacco cigarettes has been intentionally increased over the years by the tobacco industry making cigarettes highly addictive. Although most people who smoke wish they could quit, it is extremely difficult because of nicotine addiction. Almost all individuals who smoke wish they had never started, and nearly all are desperate to ensure that their children don't smoke.

Smoking is rarely a choice. Addiction removes choice, and nearly all adults who smoke become addicted while minors. Polls in New Zealand and around the world show that the majority of voters who smoke favor tobacco "endgame" laws, in particular the Smoke-Free Generation concept.

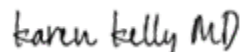
Smoking is by far the leading cause of preventable death in New Zealand and worldwide. New Zealand's Health Ministry estimates that 5,000 citizens die every year from smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke. A disproportionate number of those deaths occur among the Māori population.

The consequence of tobacco production and use has been hundreds of millions of deaths globally, an absolutely staggering number. The World Health Organization estimates that in the

absence of regulations like New Zealand's, one billion more people will die this century. The marketing and sale of tobacco has been identified as a violation of the universal right to health.

Since the passage of the tobacco endgame law last December, New Zealand has become a beacon to the world, and at least a dozen countries are moving to follow your county's lead. The tobacco endgame will happen, and New Zealand stands at a crossroads. We urge you to remain at the forefront of positive change, an inspiration to the world, and not rescind the Aotearoa/New Zealand Tobacco Action Plan legislation.

Your respectfully,



Karen L. Kelly, MD, CEO, International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer



Paul E. Van Schil, MD, PhD, President, International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer

Annex

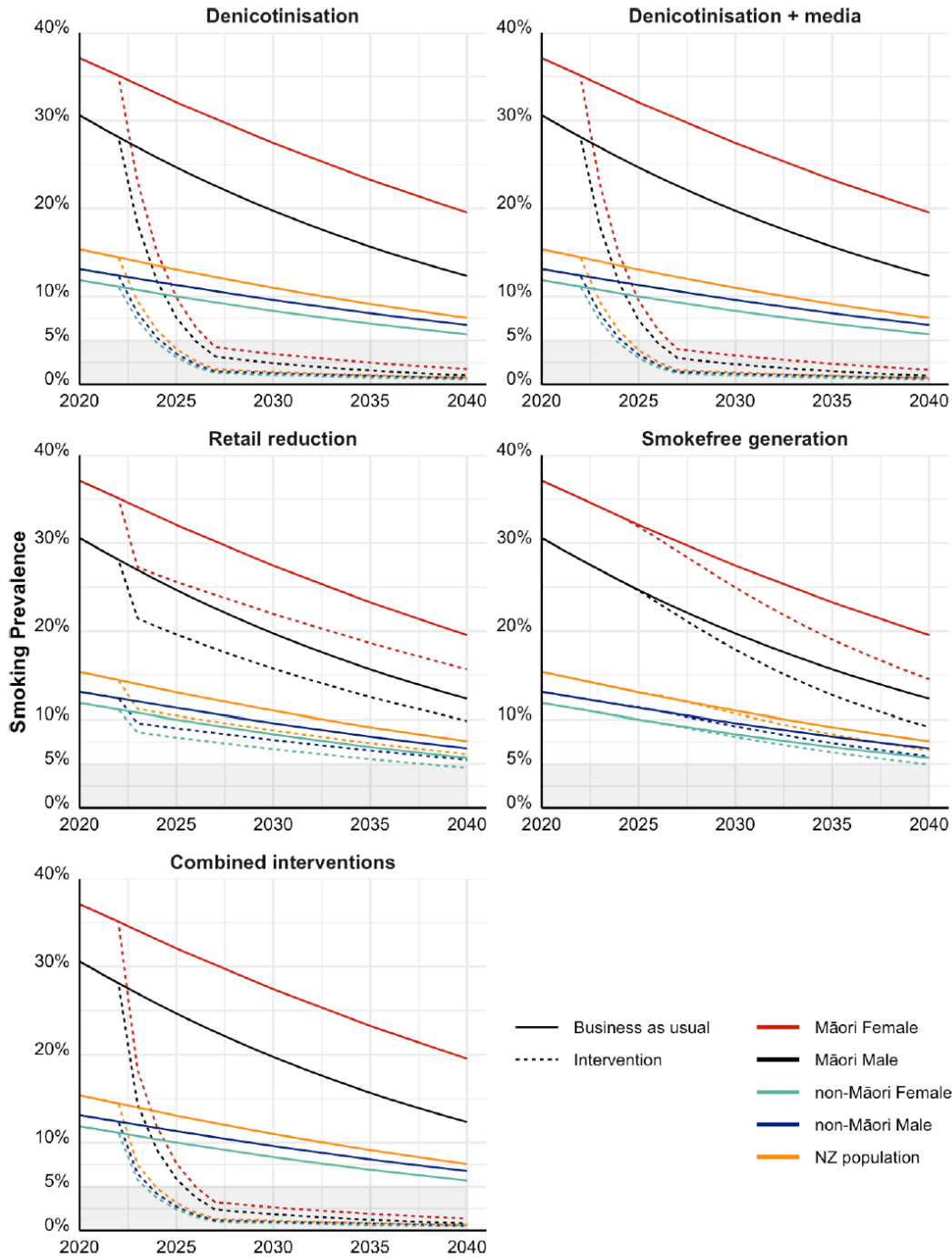


Figure 1 Smoking prevalence (daily, 20+ year population) in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) under business as usual and interventions. Prevalences are not age standardised and are calculated for the projected age structure of each sex by ethnic group in future years.

Ait Ouakrim D, Wilson T, Waa A, *et al*, Tobacco endgame intervention impacts on health gains and Māori:non-Māori health inequity: a simulation study of the Aotearoa/New Zealand Tobacco Action Plan, *Tobacco Control* Published Online First: 10 January 2023. doi: 10.1136/tc-2022-057655.