

For Immediate Release 24 August 2017

Māori-led research shows strong leadership for Smokefree outdoor policies

Research conducted by Whakauae Research for Māori Health and Development (Whanganui), and led by Dr Heather Gifford, highlights Māori public health workers and advocates attitudes towards Smokefree Outdoor Policies (SFOP). Māori leadership in creating smokefree outdoor environments was marked by the emergence, in the 1990s, of the auahi kore marae movement. While more needs to be done to ensure all marae are smokefree, the remaining challenges have not stopped Māori seeking to make other areas, of particular relevance to Māori, smokefree. Sites of cultural significance and sports and cultural events are now accepted by many as being auahi kore with Māori netball, Kapa Haka and Matariki identified in the research as being flagships for promoting smokefree outdoors. Māori leadership driving this kaupapa was identified as largely coming from the Māori health provider sector, with a strong call to strengthen iwi leadership. Messages clearly need to be positive, involve smokers and focus on protecting future generations.

“This research supports an approach to Smokefree Outdoor Policies which inspires whānau with a positive message” says Zoe Hawke, General Manager for the National Tobacco Control Advocacy Service at Hāpai Te Hauora. “The sector can take the feedback from this study and use it to inform effective community activation among Māori in support of Smokefree Outdoor Policies. For example, we encourage a tamariki-first perspective on this issue. We understand that some smokers feel individually targeted and marginalised by smoke free messages, but even the most die-hard of smokers would agree that protecting our tamariki is a positive thing.” An ex-smoker herself, Hawke admits the potential impact of second-hand smoke on her own children was a major driver in her journey to quitting. “Protecting our tamariki by ensuring the environments they live, work and play in are free from harmful second-hand smoke just makes good sense.”

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About Hāpai Te Hauora

Hāpai are national leaders in Public Health, Policy and Advocacy, Research and Evaluation and Infrastructure services. Hāpai provide a strategic focus that is underpinned by evidence based research for the advancement of health and wellbeing for communities.

The Mission of Hāpai is to increase opportunities for Māori, and all others to enjoy good health and to be sustained by healthy environments. One of their core areas of work is Tobacco Control, where Hāpai facilitate engagement between a wide range of policy makers/decision makers/influencers/communities to progress Smokefree 2025.

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