

5 December 2023



Hon Dr Shane Reti
Minister of Health
Parliament
Wellington

Re: Repeal of the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products (Smoked Tobacco) Amendment Act.

Tēnā koe Minister Reti,

Congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Health. We look forward to working with you in this role.

As a representative society of health professionals, the New Zealand Society of Anaesthetists is deeply concerned with the government's decision to repeal the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products Amendment Act.

The New Zealand Society of Anaesthetists (NZSA) is a professional medical society representing over 800 Anaesthetists and Specialist Pain Medicine Physicians (SPMP) in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our members include Specialist and Trainee Anaesthetists and SPMPs in public and private practice. The NZSA's key roles are advocacy, facilitating and promoting education, strengthening networks of anaesthetists nationwide and promoting high-quality perioperative care and patient safety.

The negative health impacts of smoking tobacco are clear. Removing the additional measures that the amendment act offered to reduce smoking rates will contribute to further burden on our health system by increasing:

- the likelihood that future generations will start smoking;
- the risk of surgical complications;
- and the number of patients requiring medical intervention from the effects of smoking.

As Anaesthetic specialists, we can advocate for a patient to cease smoking in relation to the risks associated with their surgery and recovery. One such resource to assist us in doing so is The Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists' (ANZCA) PG12(POM) 2014

'Guideline on smoking as related to the perioperative period'. This resource outlines clear research that supports the short- and long-term benefits apparent for a patient who does not, or ceases, smoking around the time of surgery. It includes the following two statements:

- Smokers are at increased risk of perioperative respiratory, cardiac and wound related complications, and quitting smoking may reduce the risk of complications.¹
- Smoking worsens surgical outcomes. This has been demonstrated in over 300 studies that have been carried out since the first published study in 1944 by a British anaesthetist who found a six-fold increase in pulmonary complications in smokers following abdominal surgery.²

Both statements demonstrate how a reduction in the number of smokers in Aotearoa would lead to a reduction in medical intervention required relating to surgery. Thereby another means that would relieve some of the pressure on our health system and improve outcomes for patients.

The additional steps the amendment act offered to build on existing measures could significantly reduce the likelihood of future generations starting smoking and further improve the chances of our patients successfully ceasing smoking. Therefore, improving their recovery rate and reducing surgery and anaesthetic related risks or in some circumstances the need for surgery or medical intervention altogether.

We urge the government to reconsider its position on repealing the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products Amendment Act and welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further.

Ngā mihi,



Dr Morgan Edwards
NZSA President

1. Khullar D, Maa J. The impact of smoking on surgical outcomes. J Am Coll Surg 2012 Sep;215(3):418-426.
2. Morton H. Tobacco smoking and pulmonary complications after operation. Lancet. 1944;243(6290):368-370