

Tobacco tax zealots are now changing their tune

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

It is clear we have reached a sea-change on tobacco policy, with long-standing champions of tobacco tax hikes now changing their tune, says the New Zealand Taxpayers' Union.

On the AM Show this morning, Hāpai Te Hauora CEO Lance Norman admitted that tobacco excise "is having a negative impact on other areas of the community so we need to work out how we address that issue."

Mr Norman pointed out that even with such punitive taxes, over a third of Māori continue to smoke, and went on to advocate for the legalization of nicotine e-cigarettes.

Taxpayers' Union Executive Director Jordan Williams says, "This is the same organisation that, as recently as January, was urging the Government to remain committed to tobacco excise tax increases."

A representative from Counties Manukau Stop Smoking was also on the show saying tobacco excise takes money out of families' food budgets.

"Public health groups who once championed the nanny state are waking up to the harms of tax," says Mr Williams.

"In fact, the legalisation of nicotine-e-cigarettes - which are around 95% safer than conventional smokes - is now supported by groups across the spectrum. The legalisation would represent a billion dollar tax cut for some of the poorest New Zealanders."

"Meanwhile, the Government drags its feet, justifying their inaction by waiting on a review from the Ministry of Health – despite a wealth of existing evidence on the effectiveness of e-cigarettes. Clearly, our politicians remain addicted to the revenue from cigarettes sales."

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