

WHAT DO MĀORI POLICYMAKERS THINK ABOUT SMOKE FREE POLICY ON MARAE?

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Background: Marae have been recognised as being able to make a significant contribution towards health among Māori (Minhinick 1989; Te Puni Kokiri 1995; Durie M, 1999) and since 1990 have been utilised as a site for health promoting activity including the promotion of smokefree policies. Anecdotal evidence suggests that while a number of marae have some smokefree policies in place, not all marae are smokefree. Here we describe the responses of Māori policymakers to the question “how can we achieve progress on smokefree environments including marae”.

Methods: Sixteen qualitative interviews were undertaken with Māori policymakers. Participants were purposively selected based on closeness to processes relevant to tobacco control, and ability to articulate information. A semi-structured interview was conducted to explore general ideas on how to achieve progress on reducing smoking in homes, cars and community property including marae.

Results: Key points identified for enhancing smokefree environments on marae:

1. The need for tino rangatiratanga or Māori self determination in policy development on marae;
2. The need for wider health promotion campaigns targeting community venues such as marae;
3. The need for champions and leadership at a local level to drive policy change; and,
4. The use of tikanga as the most appropriate tool with which smoking at marae could be reduced.

- Marae were thought of as private spaces, and government regulation was considered by virtually all Māori participants to be an inappropriate means of controlling smoking behaviour on them.
- Leadership was seen to represent the communal feeling of those belonging to a specific marae, and represented a grassroots, rather than ‘top-down’ change. Leadership would foster a change in the tikanga (customs or protocol) of a marae.
- Some suggested that local decisions for Māori settings would have a flow over effect to other venues, many of them very public sites such as rivers and mountains significant to local iwi or hapū.
- Some reasoned that smokefree regulation elsewhere in the community would influence Māori attitudes to smoking around children.
- Some noted that the progressive adoption of smokefree tikanga, even with strong leadership, was likely to meet resistance from smokers and because of long-standing smoking norms among Māori.

Conclusion: It is possible and necessary to strengthen smoke free policies on marae. Increasing the smoke free environments that are culturally significant for Māori not only minimises harm from secondhand smoke, but is a critical component in the denormalisation of tobacco smoking for Māori. Marae smokefree policy implementation needs persistent local level leadership to drive policy forward and to maintain it as a stable part of marae tikanga. Government can play a key role by ensuring legislation for smokefree public spaces is supported, therefore contributing to wider social expectations that smoking in public spaces and around children is unacceptable.

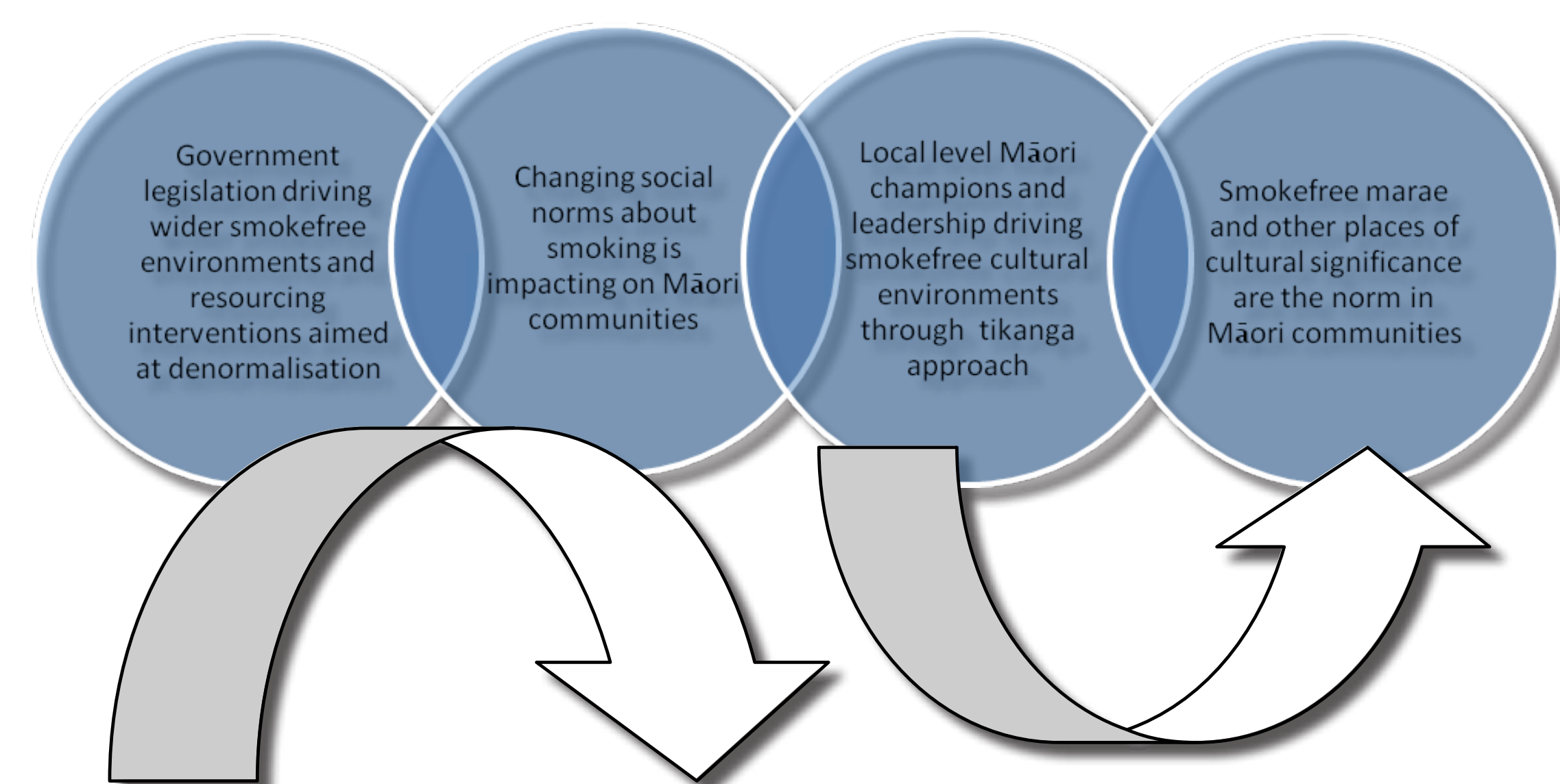
References

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Smokefree Marae Policy Implementation; Pathways and Process



Arrows indicate a process of Marae smokefree policy implementation. Change may be met with resistance, needs persistent local level leadership to drive forward, and is often unstable, with policy changes dependant on ongoing local level support. Māori smokefree advocates will need to maximise change opportunities created by wider and possibly longer-term denormalisation of tobacco for Māori, as they accommodate the more immediate needs of a current generation of elders and marae volunteers who are smokers.