

18 July 2025

An Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, TD  
Dept of the Taoiseach  
Email [taoiseach@taoiseach.gov.ie](mailto:taoiseach@taoiseach.gov.ie)

Minister for Health, Jennifer Carroll MacNeill, TD  
Email [ministersoffice@health.gov.ie](mailto:ministersoffice@health.gov.ie)

Dear An Taoiseach Micheál Martin and Minister for Health Jennifer Carroll MacNeill

### **REQUEST TO CONSIDER PUBLIC HEALTH OUTCOMES OVER INDUSTRY CLAIMS**

We write on behalf of Health Coalition Aotearoa, an alliance of over 60 health organisations and public health experts, clinicians, academics and community leaders united by a shared goal: to reduce the impact of harmful products and improve health outcomes for all New Zealanders.

We follow Ireland's journey with alcohol health warning labels with keen interest.

Ireland's staunch leadership in public health (for example, the ban on smoking in public places) is inspirational for the public health community here in New Zealand and elsewhere.

Following Ireland's outstanding public health leadership, conversations about cancer warning labels are now occurring in Australia and New Zealand (see [here](#) and [here](#)). We are seeing the impact of Ireland's leadership throughout the global public health community.

Your incoming requirement for alcohol warning labels has led one New Zealand wine brand (Villa Maria) to put warning labels on their products bound for Ireland, spurring [media](#) and public interest on the issue in New Zealand.

These conversations are highly relevant with [recent polling](#) of New Zealanders showing high levels of support (66%) for a cancer warning label.

**Health Coalition Aotearoa cautions against putting too much weight on alcohol industry critiques of the policy, including claims that it will affect exports.** We note the WHO's Global Alcohol Action Plan, which states: "The development of public policies to reduce the harmful use of alcohol should be protected... from commercial and other vested interests."

Here in New Zealand, [we saw multiple attempts by the alcohol industry to derail pregnancy warning labels](#) – and they were successful in delaying the label requirement for over twenty years.

The alcohol industry uses delay tactics for many public health interventions. With pregnancy warning labels, this included first developing their own self-regulatory labelling scheme (this had low rates of compliance, with 38% compliance in the first review two years after implementation, and only 48% compliance a further four years after the first review) and frequent objections around cost.

Industry attempts to water down the policy continue, even after the pregnancy warning labels became mandatory. For example, an industry petition was made to allow corrugated cardboard packaging to not require a coloured warning label, which was approved. As well as this, there are no efforts from the industry to put label stickers on stock already manufactured, resulting in one-third of alcohol products missing the pregnancy warning label a year after being made mandatory.

We dearly hope our experience, and continuing efforts to maintain the integrity of our pregnancy warning label, provides a lens through which your current industry objections can be viewed.

In New Zealand, we have real problems with the alcohol industry involvement in public health policy. [Recently our media uncovered evidence](#) of regular contact between senior officials and alcohol industry representatives. Industry representatives have raised concerns about low-risk drinking guidelines, were asked by our government officials for input to a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder action plan and a framework to guide the investment of the alcohol levy (a key public fund for activities to address the harm caused by alcohol).

In New Zealand, Health Coalition Aotearoa is calling for new “rules of engagement” between officials and the alcohol industry to indicate that:

- government officials should exclude the alcohol industry from the development and decision stages of making policy to reduce alcohol harm. Industry members would still be able to make submissions to public processes, like writing submissions.
- the Government should ensure higher standards of transparency when engaging with the industry.

These recommendations are from our [Level the Playing Field](#) campaign (advocating for tighter regulation of lobbying).

Overall, we commend your courage, leadership and vision on this important issue. Ireland’s example is instrumental for building the impetus to enact similar policies here, particularly with the similarities between our countries including population size and heavy burden from alcohol related harm.

We deeply value your leadership and encourage you to continue championing this important cause that will help to raise awareness and support informed choices, both in Ireland and globally.

Nāku noa, nā

**Dr Lisa Te Morenga**

Co-Chair, Health Coalition Aotearoa

**Boyd Swinburn**

Co-Chair, Health Coalition Aotearoa