



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Lung Cancer kills more New Zealanders than any other cancer**

*Every year for fifty years, lung cancer has killed more New Zealanders than any other cancer*

**Wednesday 1 August 2018** - Today the Lung Foundation is calling for better funding of new treatments for New Zealand's deadliest cancer.

Every year in New Zealand more people die of lung cancer than breast cancer, prostate cancer and melanoma **combined**.

**Phillip Hope, Lung Foundation Chief Executive, says** tobacco taxes have been used as a cash cow for many years and haven't been adequately reinvested into lung health promotion, early detection or more effective treatments that are now available for lung cancer.

"More than 1800 Kiwis die from lung cancer every year, that's four times our national road toll. Yet only 3% of tobacco tax is directed to smoking cessation and tobacco control programmes."

Small changes to the way New Zealand manages and funds the prevention and treatment of lung disease and lung cancer will save hundreds of lives every year, enabling patients to enjoy a better quality of life with their families.

"We need more common sense funding of more effective treatments for lung cancer and a commitment to early detection," says Hope.

**Lung Foundation Medical Director & Associate Professor of Oncology, Chris Atkinson, says** that many lung cancers are now treatable and need the financial support of the Government and PHARMAC.

"Many lung cancers are now treatable with targeted therapies and immunotherapy, such as pembrolizumab, which is a significant breakthrough compared to the current standards of care."

These treatments have less toxicity than standard chemotherapy and significantly improve survival rates, giving patients more time with their families.

"Unfortunately, New Zealand lags way behind the bulk of OECD countries with its funding of targeted therapies and immunotherapies in the public health system".

"This inequity is unacceptable and is causing unprecedented financial hardship for lung cancer patients and their families, who are being forced to either self-fund their treatment, raise funds, or face premature death," he says.

Twenty percent of people diagnosed with lung cancer in New Zealand have never smoked. In addition to this, only 30% diagnosed actually smoke at the time of diagnosis.



Lung cancer is also a major cause of health disparity between Maori and non-Maori, with lung cancer rates four times higher in Maori women and three times higher in Maori men than non-Maori.

Today, Lung Foundation New Zealand observes World Lung Cancer Day to honour and unite all kiwis that have been affected by lung cancer.

**The Lung Foundation urges everyone to understand the symptoms of lung cancer**, which can be different in each person, and to ask their doctor to check their lungs (X-Ray) if they have; a persistent unexplained cough that doesn't go away, chest or back pain, shortness of breath or wheezing, or repeated lung infections.

For more information about the symptoms of lung cancer and all aspects of treatment, view our lung cancer patient resources online; <https://lungfoundation.org.nz/resources/>

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