

Funded PhD opportunity

Kia ora,

We are delighted to announce a PhD scholarship for a doctoral student within a research programme funded by the New Zealand Royal Society Te Apārangi Rutherford Discovery Fellowship. The programme examines cannabis legalisation reforms through the lens of the commercial determinants of health. Applications are welcome from candidates based in Aotearoa New Zealand or internationally (international candidates must relocate to Auckland).

The successful candidate will develop their own PhD project aligned with the broader research programme, with flexibility to pursue an area of personal research interest. Applicants will ideally have a background in public health, drug policy, digital marketing, media studies or another social science discipline (e.g. law, economics, business). Familiarity with cannabis policy and/or commercial determinants of health frameworks is particularly welcome.

The candidate will be based at the [NZ Drug Research Team](#), SHORE & Whāriki Research Centre, Massey University, Albany campus. Hybrid working arrangements can be negotiated following an initial period of onboarding and team engagement. Associate Professor Marta Rychert (Programme Lead) will be your primary doctoral supervisor, alongside other senior team members.

Introduction to the research programme: The legalisation of cannabis in select US states, Canada, Uruguay, and Germany, and the development of vaping technologies have collided, creating the biggest change in the addictive substances space in decades. Aotearoa New Zealand has grappled with the cannabis legalisation for medical use and held a national referendum on recreational cannabis reform in 2020. Recent cannabis policy reforms and cannabis vaping technologies have the potential to improve public health and social equity by reducing arrests and negative health effects from smoking. Yet, there is also a risk of creating new harms, including from commercial industry actors primarily focused on profit, with a disproportionate impact on populations facing health and social inequities, including youth, Māori and Pacific communities. This research programme will examine how the new industries shape information environment, lobby and influence regulatory processes, and promote industry-friendly narratives in digital spaces. Methods include social media analyses, digital media monitoring and analysis, a survey of frequent cannabis consumers and vapers, and interviews with key policy stakeholders. The programme will make a theoretical contribution to the commercial determinants of health field, providing evidence for policy and regulatory response.

Details: We hope to appoint the doctoral candidate by May 2026. The successful applicant will receive an annual tax-free stipend of \$35,000 and doctoral fees will be paid for 3 years. You will be a key member of the research team, attend team meetings, and undertake data collection and analysis that will contribute to your PhD as well as the broader project. During the study, you will be supported to develop research skills and publish results from your research in peer-reviewed academic journals.

If you are interested, please send a copy of your CV, a writing sample (e.g., a research paper, report or a university assignment), and a brief statement outlining why you are interested in the project, what topic you are interested to pursue, and experiences or skills that you would bring. We will shortlist and interview applicants in early April 2026. The closing date for applications: 20 March 2026

For more details or to submit your application, please contact: Associate Professor Marta Rychert: m.rychert@massey.ac.nz