Keep our place a smoke-free space

NATIONAL BEST PRACTICE UNIT

TACKLING INDIGENOUS SMOKING

Being completely smoke-free at work can be challenging at first. This journal will help you take control of your smoking habit by helping you understand your cravings and adjust to life without cigarettes at work. The journal includes tips and tricks for staying smoke-free, as well as input from Professor Tom Calma AO FAA, National Coordinator Tackling Indigenous Smoking.

So come on, take the 28-day challenge to be smoke-free at work and start the journey to a healthier you.

Start date:

Begin by deciding when you are going to stop smoking at work.
Or, if you feel ready, set a quit date and stop smoking completely.

Stopping smoking completely is the best way to improve your health. From the first minute of being smoke-free your body starts to repair and adjust to life without nicotine. Track your progress and smoking triggers by completing the daily journal entries.

WEEK 1 TRIGGERS? CRAVINGS?

MONDAY

Cravings can start after 2 hours without a smoke

TUESDAY

Usually smoke on a coffee break? Drink your coffee in smoke-free areas.

WEDNESDAY

Cravings are at their peak – use your stress ball or fidget spinner to fight off those urges to smoke

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

Drink less caffeine (coffee, cola, energy drinks) to stay smoke-free

SUNDAY

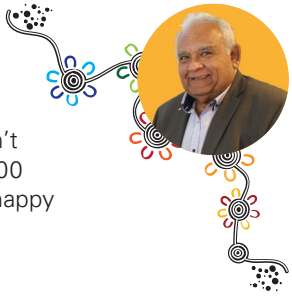
Cravings should be happening less often now

Smoke Break

Identifying and avoiding your smoking triggers will help you to break the habit. If you used to have a smoke when taking a coffee break, try drinking your coffee in non-smoking areas. Some people find drinking less coffee or other drinks which include caffeine (such as cola and some energy drinks) also helps. Don't forget you can call the Aboriginal Quitline on 137 848 if you need more support.

HOW ARE YOU FEELING?	$ SAVED	SMOKE-FREE
Carbon monoxide in your blood stream decreases. Oxygen reaches your heart and lungs more easily.		○
Your sense of smell and taste should start to improve		○
The nicotine is out of your body and your lungs are getting rid of mucus and other smoking debris		○
Breathing should be getting easier		○
Remind yourself why you want to be smoke-free		○
		○
Well done – you made it through the first week of being smoke-free.		○

Tips from Tom



It's never too late to get off the smokes – what could you possibly regret about making such an important decision? It's now more than 45 years since I gave up cigarettes. I haven't had one of those filthy little things since then. If I hadn't quit in September 1977 I would have smoked more than 400,000 cigarettes by now! I'm sure both my doctor and my wallet are happy I quit when I did.

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WEEK 2 TRIGGERS? CRAVINGS?

MONDAY

Still getting cravings? Keep carrot sticks or slices of fruit handy as healthy snacks to eat when cravings strike.

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

Use the 4Ds to cope with cravings: distract, delay, deep breathing and drinking water.

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

Smoke Break

Three quick facts on smoking:

1. Tobacco smoking is the largest preventable cause of cancer.
2. There are 16 cancers that can be caused by smoking.
3. It's never too late to quit smoking. The body begins to repair itself as soon as you stop smoking.

HOW ARE YOU FEELING?	$ SAVED	SMOKE-FREE
Did you know tobacco smoking causes at least 15 different types of cancer including lung and bowel cancer?		
If you are on your quit journey, you should be really feeling the benefits of not smoking. Exercise should be easier and you should have more energy		

Tips from Tom

Giving up smoking can be a journey of ups and downs as smokers work through the withdrawal symptoms. The good news is smokers often describe "gaining a new zest for life" within weeks of breaking free from using tobacco. This is supported by research showing, when compared to people who keep puffing, quitters report better moods, less anxiety, less stress and a better quality of life. Importantly, the well-being and positive mental health benefits from quitting align comfortably with our cultural focus on holistic health.

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WEEK 3 TRIGGERS? CRAVINGS?

MONDAY

TUESDAY

Chew a toothpick or suck on a straw instead of a cigarette

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

Smoke Break

There are around 70 different chemicals in a cigarette known to cause cancer.

Smoking increases the chances of getting stomach cancer by 61%.

People who smoke are 10 times more likely to get mouth cancer.

Keep our place a smoke-free space

HOW ARE YOU FEELING?	$ SAVED	SMOKE-FREE
If you've given up the smokes completely your skin and teeth might be looking better by now		
How much money have you saved by being smoke-free?		

Tips from Tom

On top of the health benefits of quitting smoking, the financial saving is a strong incentive. I have heard many success stories from reformed smokers. It is always great to hear how people have utilised their savings, including taking family on holidays, buying new clothes and whitegoods, a new boat and even property deposits! These are important stories to share, because smokers don't always realise how much they miss out on because of the smokes.

WEEK 4 TRIGGERS? CRAVINGS?

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

Mindfulness or breathing exercises can help relieve stress and cravings

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

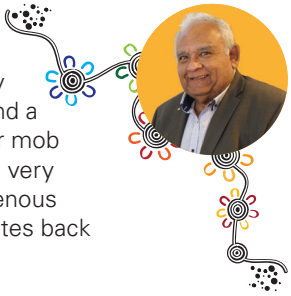
Smoke Break

The Tackling Indigenous Smoking program has been running for more than a decade, with these activities aligning with a reduction in our mob's smoking rates. Between 2004 and 2018, the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who smoke dropped by 9.8%.There are now 50,000 fewer daily smokers among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, with many lives saved. Make sure yours is one of them!

Keep our place a smoke-free space

HOW ARE YOU FEELING?	$ SAVED	SMOKE-FREE
Did you know a cigarette butt is the world's most littered plastic item? Butts pollute the environment with poisons and microplastics.		○
		○
		○
		○
		○
Well done – if you made it this far without smoking, you should be feeling much stronger and healthier and free of cravings!		○

Tips from Tom



Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers were paid with tobacco rations, instead of money, until the 1960s. This lay the foundation for generations of Indigenous tobacco addicts and a norm of smoking in many of our communities. Yes, some of our mob have traditionally used native tobaccos such as pituri, but this is very different to a pack-a-day cigarette addiction. The Tackling Indigenous Smoking program is helping to break a colonialism cycle that dates back more than a century.

Keep our place a smoke-free space

Smoke Break

Vaping has become more common in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities over the past few years. Vaping is suggested to be safer than cigarette smoking because e-cigarettes don't produce the tar found in conventional cigarettes. But that does not mean they are harmless. Vaping exposes you to many harmful chemicals. This includes heavy metals such as chromium, nickel and lead in greater quantities than in conventional cigarettes. High concentrations of these heavy metals have been linked to health problems such as cardiovascular disease, brain damage and cancer.

Tips from Tom

Has someone in your workplace successfully given up smoking or vaping? Do what you can to promote these positive outcomes to encourage colleagues they too can succeed in kicking the habit. Good news stories play a vital role in helping our mob to "say no to tobacco". The domino effect that positive stories can have is amazing, so be sure to help celebrate our stories of success.

Smoke Break

Avoiding smoking triggers can help you stay off the smokes. Did you know many people find drinking alcohol and smoking often go hand in hand? Too much alcohol can make it harder to stick to your plan to stop smoking, so try not to have more than one or two alcoholic drinks. Don't forget to call the Aboriginal Quitline on 137 848 if you need additional support.

Tips from Tom

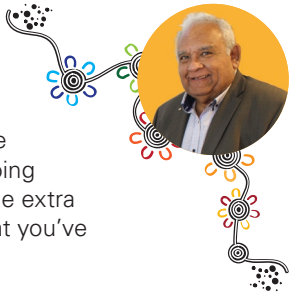
Did you know Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are almost three times as likely to suffer from diabetes than non-Indigenous Australians? Smoking can lead to Type 2 diabetes, a condition where the body loses the capacity to produce the right amount of insulin. The risk of developing diabetes increases with the number of cigarettes smoked, so working towards being cigarette-free will decrease your diabetes risks. There is no safe level of smoking, so quit the smokes completely for the biggest health benefits.

Smoke Break

Smoking isn't just harming you and your family, it's also terrible for the environment! The world's most littered plastic item is cigarette butts, with trillions thrown into the environment around the world every year. Cigarette butts pollute the environment with poisons and microplastics. E-cigarettes also create waste in the form of single-use plastics, tech waste such as lithium batteries and toxic chemicals when discarded. Giving up smoking: good for you, good for Country.

Keep our place a smoke-free space

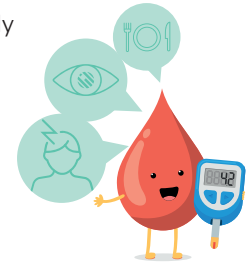
Tips from Tom



Just because you've given up the smokes doesn't mean you won't be tempted every now and then. Aboriginal Quitline is available on 137 848 if you want to speak to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander counsellor during those times when you're finding it tough. Talking to someone who knows what you're going through can help you feel like you aren't alone – and give you the extra motivation to keep away from the cigarettes. Well done on what you've achieved so far.

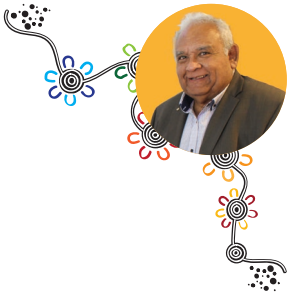
Smoke Break

Did you know Indigenous Australians are almost three times as likely to suffer from diabetes than non-Indigenous Australians? Smoking can lead to Type 2 diabetes, a condition where the body loses the capacity to produce the right amount of insulin. Symptoms can include headaches, blurred vision and an increased appetite. The risk of developing diabetes increases with the number of cigarettes smoked, so working towards being cigarette-free will decrease your diabetes risks.



Tips from Tom

When it comes to Closing the Gap, there have been many positive outcomes in reducing Indigenous smoking in the past decade. A 2020 study showed a downward trend of daily smoking among Indigenous adults from 50% in 2004-05 to 40% in 2018-19. Plenty of work still needs to be done, but we should celebrate successes such as these.



Smoke Break

People who smoke will often light up while driving. Cleaning your car, ute or vehicle of any smoking-related products can help to remove triggers. Distract yourself from smoking urges when you're driving by listening to your favourite music or podcasts.

Tips from Tom

While there are many big health issues disproportionately impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, bowel cancer is a growing concern. Smoking is a significant contributor to bowel cancer, so if you're aged between 50 and 74, take a free screening as part of the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program (NBCSP) every two years.

Smoke Break

Since children's bodies are still developing, they are particularly susceptible to third-hand smoke. Third-hand smoke is cigarette smoke absorbed into fabrics and surfaces. It can contain the same toxic and cancer-causing chemicals as a cigarette. Even if kids aren't in cars or homes when someone is smoking, third-hand smoke can be absorbed later through their skin, mouth or lungs. Experts believe exposure to third-hand smoke can lead to a number of health problems in babies and children, so keep the bubs away from smokes.

Tips from Tom

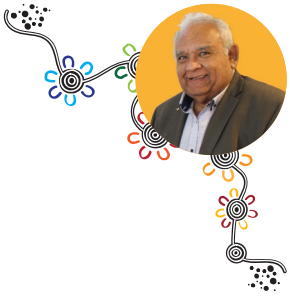
Has the smoke-free message had a positive impact in your workplace? Maybe it's time to take the message from your office or workshop onto the sports field. Tackling Indigenous Smoking staff around Australia team up with local sports organisations to promote smoke-free lifestyles. Get in touch with your local Tackling Indigenous Smoking teams to see if they have smoke-free signage, butt bins and brochures they can provide your sports groups. Fit, happy and healthy non-smokers provide a powerful message to young people in our community.

Smoke Break

When you smoke, the hormone dopamine is released into your body and makes you feel good, but this feel-good hormone is also experienced when you exercise! Consider joining a sports team or increasing your physical activity to deliver the dopamine your body craves. Even small changes in fitness can lead to positive outcomes.

Tips from Tom

Big dollars are being spent on developing and promoting e-cigarette products, with tobacco companies the major investors. Researchers are working hard to find out more about the health risks; it seems hardly a week goes by without new findings about harms related to vaping products. The use of e-cigarettes is not an evidence-based approach to reducing smoking prevalence.

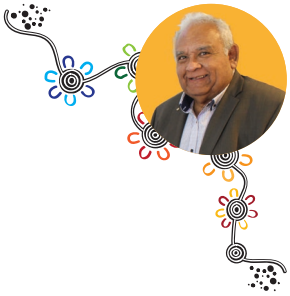


Smoke Break

Keen to grow your family? Cutting out smoking could help. Men and women who smoke are more likely to experience fertility issues than people who don't smoke. Constricted blood flow due to smoking can also cause erectile dysfunction. Cutting out cigarettes can cut down your health risks.

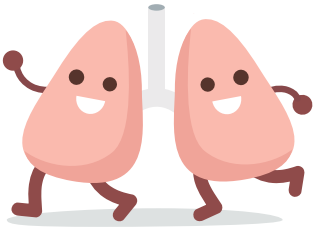
Tips from Tom

Is your workplace involved in sponsoring local community sports carnivals or similar public gatherings? Consider options to make these smoke-free events. It is my observation and firm opinion that smoke-free events don't discourage people from attending, but they're definitely a healthier option.



Smoke Break

Tobacco smoking accounts for the majority of liver cancer fatalities in Australia. Compared with people who have never smoked cigarettes, a current smoker has a 25-times greater risk of lung cancer. Within six months of giving up smokes, lung function increases by 30% and lungs are better at removing mucus, tar and dust. If you're ready to breathe easy again, bin the cigarettes today.



Tips from Tom

When you look at the fact a person with a 30 cigarette a day habit spends at least $350 per week, that's a lot of money which could be put towards something else. The health benefits are an important incentive to quit or not take up smoking, but it's also worth considering smoking's financial burden. People who smoke often say the habit helps them with stress, even though research shows stress levels in people who smoke are actually higher. Maybe the additional stress comes from having to find an extra $18,000 or so per year to fund their habit?

Smoke Break

Quitting cigarettes isn't just important for health reasons, it also makes sense for the wallet! Someone who smokes 30 cigarettes per day spends at least $350 a week, so giving up could save you more than $18,000 per year. What will you do with all that extra pocket money?

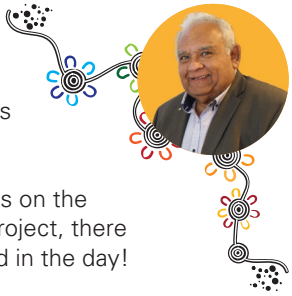
Tips from Tom

In the last Australian census, more than a third of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population was under 14 years of age, so we have to look after our young mob. Studies show if kids see family members smoking they are more likely to take up the habit. By assisting parents and guardians to kick cigarettes, we are giving our future Elders and leaders a better chance to make their own deadly choices.

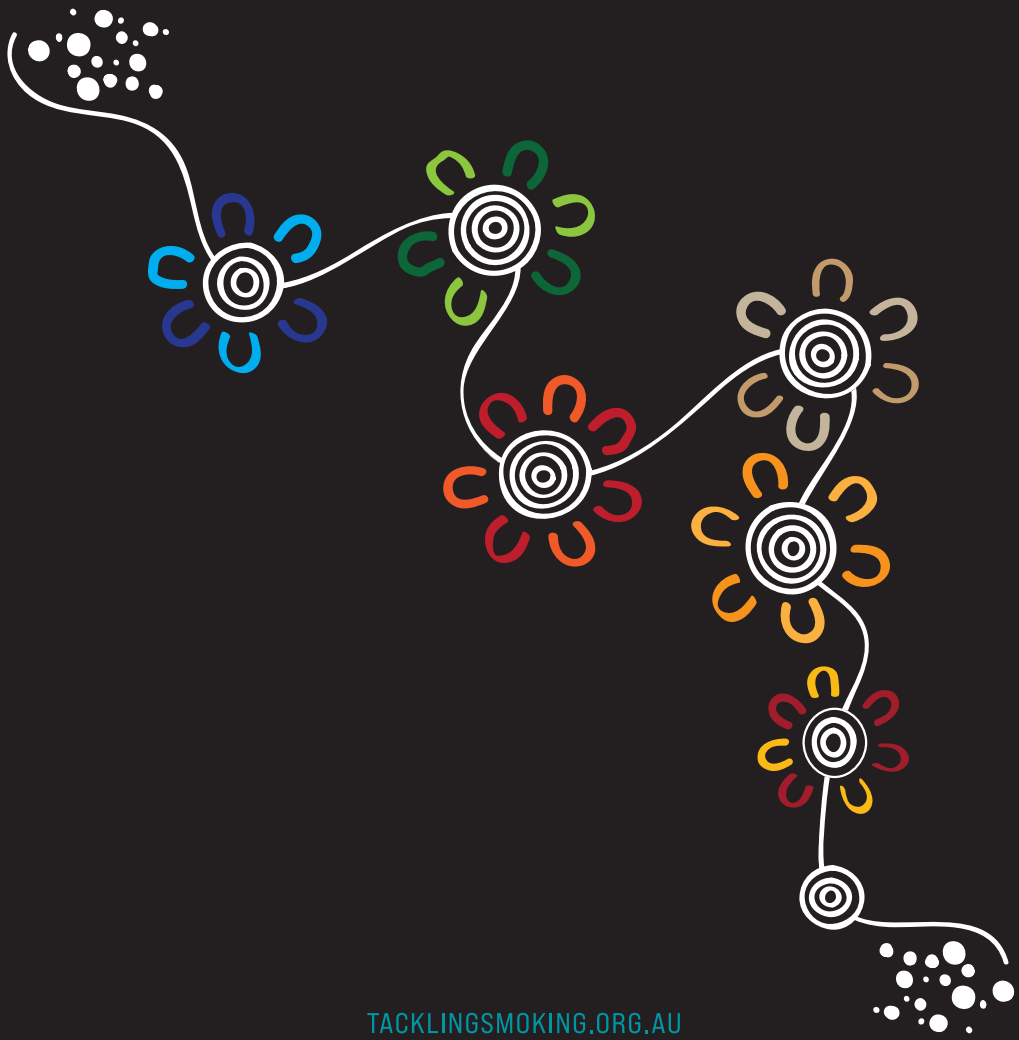
Smoke Break

Aboriginal Quitline has professional counsellors trained to assist people with kicking their habit. Counsellors will provide callers with a plan for quitting that is tailored to their individual needs, as well as information on different quitting methods and products. Studies show that Quitline greatly increases the chance of quitting. If you need some support, call Quitline on 137 848 and ask to speak to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander counsellor.

Tips from Tom



Tackling Indigenous Smoking staff around Australia celebrate World No Tobacco Day each year on May 31. Keep an eye out in your community for what events the local Tackling Indigenous Smoking team is doing in your area around this time. World No Tobacco Day provides TIS teams a chance to partner with local schools, businesses and organisations to create local awareness on the positives of living a smoke-free life. If you're part of the ORIC project, there might even be an opportunity for your workplace to get involved in the day!



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