

## Championing a Smoke-Free Lifestyle



Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation provides services to the local Aboriginal communities in and around the far south west Victorian towns of Heywood, Hamilton and Portland. There are high levels of smoking in the local communities which the Winda-Mara TIS team are working to address through a range of population health promotion activities including:

- Quit Champions;
- Willan, Winda-Mara's Yellow Tailed Black Cockatoo Mascot;
- Short films describing individual quit journeys;
- TV commercials;
- Quitboard showcasing behaviour change stories;
- Youth programs.



Winda-Mara take the view that because different things work for different people, it is important to take a multi-level approach to population health promotion. They have however found that promoting Quit Champions is one activity that works really well across communities and age groups. This is because the champions are local community members, so they are recognised by community and people can relate to their stories. Quit Champions' stories are displayed on posters, and these posters are very visible across the region, including Portland district hospital, Heywood hospital and at Winda-Mara medical centers.

Community engagement and building capacity through this engagement is also an important part of the process for Winda-Mara. People are asked right at start of their quit journey if they will be able to share their story and become a Quit Champion. Interestingly, what started out as an educational tool now seems to have become a motivator and an incentive for individuals trying to quit. People starting their quit journey want to share their story and educate others – they see it as a way they can support others and help their community to become healthier.



One example of a successful Quit Champion is Brian, a transport driver at Winda-Mara. Brian designed his own poster, which tells his personal story of how smoking has impacted his health to this day. Brian has asthma and needs \$400 worth of medications a month to keep him breathing. Now he has quit smoking his medications are reducing and he is getting fitter. Brian is a great advocate for quitting smoking and will happily share his quit story with everyone. As a transport driver he has a lot of contact with community. Brian will have casual chat with people about his experience. It is a hard-hitting story that tells itself. Brian's poster was also shared on Facebook which generated 100 views, 56 likes and 19 shares, showing great community engagement with their message.

Winda-Mara is positive about the move to a population health promotion approach to TIS, whilst also acknowledging the challenges this poses. They know the effort they are making is working, because they have data to show an increase in the proportion of non-smokers from 13.5% to 15.1% in the first six month of the program.