

# Tobacco Control News

Public Health Association of Australia - Preventive Health Conference 2024

## Building Prevention Success Stories



### Hi TIS Teams!

I'm excited to bring you this special update, sharing the key highlights from my experience at the Public Health Association of Australia Preventive Health Conference 2024 held in Garramilla (Darwin) on Larrakia Country. The conference was attended by health professionals and other stakeholders from across Australia. A key focus of the conference was exploring the many ways we can build preventive health success.

During the three-day event, I had the chance to discuss, share, and learn about the latest research, strategies, and innovations in preventative health. The conference featured inspiring keynote speakers (some of them from our TIS family) and showcased success stories in areas such as nutrition, physical activity, education, climate change, and maternal health - as well as my focus for the conference: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, tobacco control, and vaping.

I particularly appreciated listening to the latest research findings from Australian Indigenous researchers on tobacco control and approaches to addressing vaping. Below are highlights from some of the presentations I was able to catch. For more information about these presentations, you can visit the conference website [here](#).

### Community Collaboration and Engagement

The Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC) and the National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing Research worked with communities across Queensland to understand their needs concerning smoke and vape free behaviours. In 2023, they held interviews and focus groups with 13 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations, community members, health workers, and other staff. Reducing smoking and vaping prevalence was identified as a top priority. The team noted widespread concerns about vaping. People wanted clear information about the risks of vaping and ways to quit vaping. They also shared worries about how easily available vapes are, especially to children. Recommendations from the research included:

- Collaborating closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to develop clear, tailored strategies for reducing smoking and vaping prevalence.
- Engaging with young people and involving them in decision-making about promoting smoke and vape-free living.

Other presentations I saw also emphasised the importance of collaboration, co-design, and co-creation of tactics to address smoking and vaping. This includes working in partnership with parents, teachers, youth, and other stakeholders.

### Youth Education and Prevention activities

Several presentations focused on the prevention of smoking and vaping among young people. This included sessions from Cancer Council Victoria, Gippsland Lakes Complete Health, Ballarat Community Health, and the Lung Foundation Australia. Key takeaways from these sessions included:

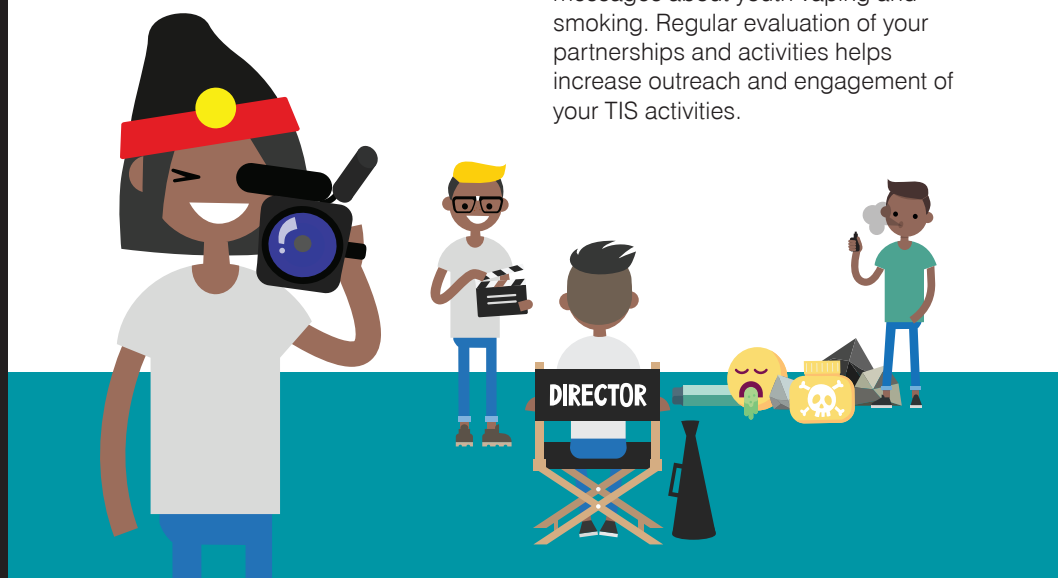
- Education is key to reducing uptake of smoking and vaping among youth. Educating youth about the dangers of smoking and how addictive tobacco products are, can discourage youth from starting smoking. Providing accurate information empowers young people to make healthier choices and prevents future smoking and vaping related health issues.
- Interactive e-learning modules like "Unveil What You Inhale" are effective tools for health promotion. However, it is necessary to assess whether these tools will work well in your community and to seek partnerships, beyond schools, to enhance their impact.
- It is also important to involve young people in program design and resource creation. For example, in Ballarat, youth helped Ballarat Community Health develop short videos with anti-vaping messaging. Ballarat Community Health also adopted a whole-school approach to address youth smoking and vaping in their community. Both these initiatives ensured the messaging remained relatable and relevant to youth.
- Collaboration with key stakeholders is essential for raising awareness and delivering targeted prevention messages about youth vaping and smoking. Regular evaluation of your partnerships and activities helps increase outreach and engagement of your TIS activities.



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## Campaign Development and Impact

Cancer Institute NSW ('Do You Know What You're Vaping?') and Cancer Council Victoria ('See Through The Haze' and 'The Con That Kills') also shared insights into the development and evaluation of their recent mass media campaigns, highlighting the real dangers of smoking and vaping. Some key lessons from their findings include:

- Campaigns are essential for informing people about the misleading strategies of the tobacco industry and dismissing misunderstandings about smoking and vaping. Continuously promoting the real dangers of smoking and vaping are crucial steps in preventing uptake.
- Campaigns can educate, motivate, change social norms, and increase capacity to quit.
- Creating a campaign is not a straightforward process. It involves collaborating with stakeholders and continuous testing and adjusting based on research and community feedback. This is a key part of the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process.
- Branding is also important to achieve campaign recognition and can highlight key campaign messages.
- 'Native' and influencer content gets the greatest engagement, but interest in this material can wear out quite quickly so you might need more of this content as you can only share it for a short time.
- Equally important is time management and how you will capture this information through monitoring and evaluation. Setting clear timelines for each phase of a campaign and using strong evaluation methods will help track progress, identify areas for improvement, and measure the campaign's reach and engagement.
- Using a diverse approach to engage young people is important. A balance between traditional campaigns and youth-led initiatives will ensure both recognition and engagement of your TIS messaging.
- Broad reaching audio-visual media are needed initially to educate, motivate, and enable change. Social and digital messaging, with its interactivity can then remind, engage, and provide cues to act. It can also provide support through a shared community.
- Maintaining flexibility across the various social media channels is key to optimising reach and the engagement of your TIS messaging among youth.
- When it comes to choosing channels for messaging, going where your audience goes matters most. Find out what social media they consume and where they go outside of home – community centre, skate park, cinema? Place your messages there.

## Strengthening Communication

Effective communication helps people take better care of their health. Research suggests that people can better understand and make informed decisions about their health when they have access to information in their first language. However, this isn't always available in healthcare settings.

During one of the sessions, Miwatj Health explained how they created a resource development process centred around the worldviews, voices, and values of the local Yolngu community. By actively engaging with key stakeholders in their community, they were able to create culturally sensitive and relevant in-language health resources. By prioritising a collaborative approach and strengthening local partnerships, Miwatj Health showed how effective communication in public health is not just about language skills, but also about cultural relevance and community engagement.

Studies from [Generation Vape](#) and University of Melbourne examined people's perceptions of vaping laws in Australia. Focus groups were carried out with parents (Gen Vape) and youth and adults including those who currently vape or have previously vaped and those who have never vaped (University of Melbourne). The studies found:

- A lack of knowledge and understanding of anti-vaping legislation.
- Some parents felt legislation would help prevent youth vaping whilst others felt the laws would make no difference to youth behaviour.
- Parents agreed laws were convoluted and full of loopholes.
- Most people were in favour of restricting the availability of non-nicotine vapes.

It is important to effectively communicate vaping laws to youth and adults – including parents. As Australia moves forward with further reforms in vaping laws, parents, elders, and community leaders need accurate information about legislative changes. Stay informed about the vaping reforms via the [TGA website](#).

### Take Home Message for TIS Teams:

Collaboration, co-design, and co-creation are essential components of preventative health programs. Clear communication is also important for making sure the community understands the harms of smoking and vaping, and the benefits of a smoke and vape free life. Developing user-friendly activities and resources that can successfully motivate community change and better health outcomes comes from:

- forming partnerships;
- listening to community needs;
- working within local ways of knowing being and doing.

Working in partnership will also boost the reach of your TIS activities. But remember that for the messaging to be heard, you must go where your audience goes. Recognising the habits and routines of each community and integrating these into the planning and delivery of TIS activities is central to the success of the program.

Well, that's all from me for now. It was truly wonderful to see familiar faces at the Darwin conference, and I hope to see even more of you in October, at the upcoming Oceania Tobacco Control Conference in the Gold Coast!

