

# Tobacco Control News

November 2024

## Oceania Tobacco Control Conference 2024



Pacific Island nations are leading the way to stop tobacco industry interference, island by island. At the conference, we heard inspiring examples of how they draw on the strength of their community's local knowledge, cultural values, and self-determination—focusing on their elders, local leaders, and youth to drive positive change.



### Hi TIS Teams!

This month, I'm excited to share a quick update about the Oceania Tobacco Control Conference, which was hosted on the lands of the Kombumerri people of the Yugambeh Language Region (Gold Coast, Queensland) on the 23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> October. Held every two years, this was the first get together since 2019 because of the global COVID-19 pandemic. This year's conference theme was 'REIGNITE THE FIGHT'. This powerful conference brought together tobacco control researchers, advocates, policymakers, service providers, and community programs from Australia, New Zealand, and Pacific Island nations. It was inspiring to see a strong representation of Indigenous peoples at the conference and so many of you representing the TIS program! Congratulations to the TIS teams who presented a talk or poster and thank you for sharing your journey, experiences, and learnings at the conference. Hearing your success stories was a highlight of the conference for many this year.

Over the three days, there were many presentations, in-depth workshops, and poster presentations to learn from, as well as opportunities to connect with key stakeholders working in this area. Sessions covered important topics including the power of community and culture, using advocacy for change, working with priority populations, tackling e-cigarettes (vaping), and addressing tobacco industry marketing and interference.

These are some of the key messages from the conference:

- The tobacco industry tests our right to good health and well-being, and we must challenge this.
- The tobacco industry continues to twist the facts about the products it makes, for its own advantage.
- We need to be careful about the language we use when discussing tobacco smoking and vaping. For example, when we say "smoke-free future," the tobacco industry twists this message to promote their new nicotine products as "smoke-free alternatives," while keeping people addicted. This is important because the tobacco industry keeps finding new ways to market harmful products that addict people to nicotine. Likewise, it is no longer about 'tobacco control' but 'tobacco industry resistance'. We must resist the tobacco industry and their products.
- The tobacco industry deliberately targets young people through social media and marketing. Working with youth to develop TIS activities and resources will help us to counter this industry interference and ensure youth and their parents understand the harms of vaping.
- The tobacco industry threatens culture and country, but we should not underestimate the power of community action.
- Building relationships and working in partnership with local services, policymakers, local media agencies, researchers and community advocates strengthens the TIS message. Making these connections across the system ('systems thinking') helps the TIS program create change and reminds us we are stronger together.
- Sharing successes, and discussing strategies and challenges together helps unite us in the fight against tobacco industry genocide.

### Take Home Message for TIS Teams

Everyone has a right to good health and wellbeing. The tobacco industry interferes with this right and continues to twist the facts about the products it makes to their own advantage. It's time to change the narrative, be courageous, and stand up for the truth. This conference showed that the TIS program is on the right track and the work you're doing is best practice (evidence based). Keep using the power of community and culture in your fight to eliminate nicotine addiction. We know this works. Connect with other TIS teams and local partners to share knowledge, experiences, and strategies. Build relationships and learn from each other. Together, we can strengthen our actions to combat tobacco industry interference and make a real difference!



Based on Shannon Best's "The Kilung Morunbal Jum"/"Death by Smoke" sculpture.



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