

Looking Back on 2024



To round off the year, I wanted to share some research highlights from 2024. A consistent message this year has been about the success of community health programs developed by those who know community best – its members. Working with community members that know and trust you is vital for the TIS program, and something we know you already do. This evidence confirms the value of this as best practice for TIS.

Adapting Quit Campaigns for Different Populations

Evidence supports tailored Quit Campaigns as one of the most effective health promotion strategies. Most people who quit do so without support from a smoking cessation program or service. Sharing evidence-based tips for coping with nicotine cravings and smoking triggers can help unaided quitters to succeed and is therefore important as part of a population health promotion campaign. Tips for an effective campaign include:

- Using visually appealing resources
- Championing real stories
- Strengths based messaging
- Using cultural elements, and
- Co-designing campaigns with the intended audience.

You can read more about the evidence to support quit campaigns [here](#) and best practice messaging for pregnant women [here](#).

Using Systems Thinking

Systems thinking is about understanding the bigger picture for the TIS program. It is important to understand how a local community is organised and how health and other services can work together for tobacco control. Evidence shows us how using a systems thinking approach and prioritising community engagement can improve health equity in tobacco control. Working in partnership with local services to spread the TIS message is an essential part of this systems thinking. At the other end of the system, referral to Quitline and trusted local quit support services is another way to achieve this. Best practice for systems thinking includes:

- a coordinated health promotion effort that considers environmental, social and financial situations
- collaboration with communities and community members.

You can read a more in-depth review of the papers [here](#).

Youth Vaping and Smoking

The findings from the Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug Survey (ASSAD), were released in December 2023. Results weren't specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, but it was still great to see the downward trend in smoking rates among Australia's youth. The survey also confirmed what we are hearing anecdotally – that whilst youth smoking rates are down, there has been an increase in vaping. Some of the key stats showed that in 2022/23:

- 14% of students reported ever smoking, down from 18% in 2017 and 19% in 2014
- 30% of students reported trying vaping, compared to 14% in 2017 and 8% in 2014
- 12% reported smoking and vaping an increase from the 8% reported in 2014 and 2017

The latest results from the Generation Vape study were also published this year, adding to our understanding of patterns of youth smoking and vaping. The study found smoking and vaping rates were higher for older youth:

- Smoking rates were 18% for 17-year-olds and 14% for 14-year-olds
- Vaping rates were 31% in 17-year-olds and 15% in 14-year-olds.

Whilst the increase in vaping is a concern, it also reminds us that it is never too early to educate youth about the benefit of not smoking or vaping. You can read more about the results from ASSAD [here](#) and Generation Vape [here](#).

Smoking behaviours among Australian secondary school students have continued to decline in recent years

14% of Australian secondary school students had ever smoked even part of a tobacco cigarette



Almost 30% of Australian secondary school students had ever vaped

Young people who vape are three times more likely to take up smoking



NATIONAL BEST PRACTICE UNIT
TACKLING INDIGENOUS SMOKING

Vaping Regulations

Since 1st October 2024:

- Vapes and vaping products can only be sold in pharmacies. They are available for cessation purposes only. It is illegal to sell vapes or vaping products anywhere else.
- Where state and territory laws allow, adults over 18 years can purchase vapes with a nicotine concentration of 20 mg/mL or less without a prescription.
- People under 18 years of age need a prescription to purchase vapes (for cessation purposes). This is to make sure they are given suitable medical advice and support about using vapes as a smoking cessation aid.

For more information on these regulations check out this [factsheet](#) from the Australian Government.

TIS Take-aways from Conference Conversations

Two key conferences in 2024 were the Public Health Association of Australia's Preventative Health Conference (PHC) and the Oceania Tobacco Control Conference (OTCC). The PHC reminded us about the importance of building preventative health success and provided some inspiring examples of:

- Community Collaboration and Engagement
- Youth Education and Prevention activities
- Campaign Development and Impact
- Strengthening Communication

The theme for this year's OTCC was 'REIGNITE THE FIGHT'. A real highlight of the year, OTCC brought together tobacco control researchers, advocates, policymakers, service providers, and community programs from Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Island nations. The conference provided an important reminder of how, by working together, we can successfully resist tobacco industry interference. A clear message was to never underestimate the power of community action. You can read more about these conferences [here](#) (PHC) and [here](#) (OTCC).

Key Messages for 2024

- It is never too early to educate youth about the benefits of not smoking or vaping
- Changing complex behaviours like smoking, needs a coordinated systems effort
- Collaborative efforts that harness power of community and culture are effective in the fight to eliminate nicotine addiction

And finally...

Before I sign off for the year, I want to reflect on the results from the 2022/23 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) released in November. It was wonderful to see a reduction in smoking rates across the population including in remote regions – and to know that the hard work of the TIS teams has contributed to this positive change. Whilst there is still work to do, this is a great achievement to celebrate as we head into 2025.

Well, that's a wrap for 2024 – wishing you all a Happy Holiday, and a safe and peaceful start to the New Year!

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey in Brief

Less than a third (29%) of people aged 15 years+ reported current daily smoking (down from 37% in 2018/19). This reduction is explained mostly by youth never smoking – 43% of people aged 15 years+ reported never smoking, up from 37% in 2018-19. A positive outcome for all those youth programs TIS teams run.

Smoking rates in remote regions are still higher than in non-remote regions, but there was an absolute decrease of 3% to 46% from 49% in 2018/19. Knowing that 50% of people living in remote areas who currently smoke made a quit attempt in the past 12 months is also very reassuring. Quit attempts are an important first step to reduced smoking prevalence, so this shows that positive change is happening in remote regions.

We also have some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific data for vaping, which tells us that 8% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years+ currently vape. Current vaping is more common in non-remote areas (9.7%) than remote areas (2.6%) and the age-group with the highest proportion of people who currently vape is 18-24 years (16%). An important reminder that it is never too early to educate youth about the benefits of not vaping.

