



Tackling Tobacco in Community Services Project

## Action on smoking and disadvantaged

Quitline 13 7848  
[www.quitsa.org.au](http://www.quitsa.org.au)

### The Tackling Tobacco in Community Services Project

This Quit SA project aims to reduce smoking related harm among the most socio-economically disadvantaged groups in SA. It does this by supporting community service organisations to address smoking within their organisation and with the population groups they serve.

While smoking rates across Australia have declined in recent years to below 20% of the population, people in the lowest socio-economic groups have smoking rates that are up to four times higher. It is these low income and socially disadvantaged groups who are now most affected by tobacco and bear a disproportionate share of the harm that smoking causes.



### Why it's important for community services organisations to tackle tobacco smoking

There are important reasons why community services organisations should address smoking:

- **Because of the harm smoking causes**  
Smoking is the leading cause of preventable disease, disability and death in our country. Each year, smoking claims the lives of around 15,000 Australians. And it's not only smokers themselves who are affected – children who are exposed to cigarette smoke are at greater risk of asthma, middle ear infections, chest infections and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- **Because of the financial burden placed on smokers**  
Smoking increases financial stress and material hardship especially for people on low or fixed incomes. One study found the lowest earning households spent nearly 20% of their total income on tobacco. By taking money from essentials, smoking reduces quality of life and maintains and deepens people's financial disadvantage.
- **Because of the benefits that quitting smoking brings**  
Quitting provides real and immediate benefits such as better health, more money and greater control over life.
- **Because they are well placed to make a difference**  
Community service organisations have the trusted relationships as well as the skills and expertise to support positive change in their clients' lives.
- **Because it aligns with their social justice values**  
It is unfair if we are less concerned about smoking among disadvantaged people than we are about smoking among other groups.

"It's the best thing I've ever done...  
I am walking better, eating better, and  
have more energy. It has saved my life!"

Comments from Mr. A, after quitting through a group program run in supported accommodation.

## Reported smoking rates among disadvantaged groups

Single mothers	46%
Aboriginal people	50%
People with schizophrenia	62%
Vulnerable young people	65%
Homeless people	70%
Prisoners	80%
People in drug and alcohol treatment	74 – 100%

## What can be done?

Addressing smoking in community service organisations need not take a lot of time or resources. There are two important areas where action can be taken – by creating a supportive, smoke-free environment and as part of regular casework.

### 1. Create a supportive service environment

It is important to create a service environment that eliminates exposure to tobacco smoke, and encourages quitting. Under SA legislation, the enclosed areas of all workplaces are required to be smoke-free. Beyond this requirement, an organisation-wide policy provides a clear statement of your position on smoking, and the practical actions you will take to reduce smoking-related harm. A complete smoking ban (a 100% smoke-free site) ensures that staff and clients are protected from Second-hand smoke. It also de-normalises smoking, and prompts those who smoke to consider quitting, and those who have quit to stay. Support to quit and information on use of Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRT) should be offered as a standard component of care for clients and staff.

### 2. Address smoking with your clients though routine casework.

Simply encouraging people to think about their smoking and the impact it has on them and others can help them take the first steps to quitting. Even simple behaviour changes – such as smoking away from children or reducing the number of cigarettes they smoke – can have an immediate positive benefit.

Organisations wanting to help clients quit smoking can take three simple steps. These steps don't require a lot of additional time or resources and can be included as part of an organisation's routine casework practice:

- Ask people about their smoking, whether they are interested in quitting and record the response as standard practice. Include agreed actions in casework goals.
- Refer people to appropriate services like the Quitline 13 7848, their GP or a local program.
- Encourage and support clients who are trying to quit or reduce their smoking and provide a supportive, smoke-free service environment.

“It's amazing, I never thought he would be able to do it. But now that he is not smoking, he has rejoined his church, his choir, and is socialising much more. He (the client) is so happy, and so much healthier than before. Before he quit, he needed frequent emergency treatment for his respiratory disease, and there has not been one incident since he quit. It's incredible to see the changes in his life – all for the better.”

CS worker Veronica, talking about her client, Mr J.

## Further information and support

The Tackling Tobacco in Community Services Project can provide a range of information, resources and support to community service organisations:

- Information sheets and other publications dealing with smoking and disadvantage, providing smoking care and other topics.
- Advice and support for organisations developing policy around smoking.
- Providing accredited, competency based staff training and case work resources to help clients address their smoking.
- Newsletters and updates.
- Access to free Nicotine Replacement Therapy products for clients and staff\*.

### For further information on the Tackling Tobacco in Community Services Project, or to order free resources:

Email: [tlucas@quitsa.org.au](mailto:tlucas@quitsa.org.au)  
Phone: (08) 8291 4181  
Website: [www.quitsa.org.au](http://www.quitsa.org.au)

This brochure is based upon a resource from the Tackling Tobacco Program, Cancer Council, NSW.

\*The project has a limited supply of Nicotine Replacement Therapy products and access is linked to eligibility criteria.

For assistance and information on quitting smoking call...

### Quit SA

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**Quitline**  
13 7848