



# Policy and Practice Brief

Our first two papers using the follow-up surveys were published in January 2017 about:

- *Pack warning labels*
- *Social determinants*

Volume 2, Issue 1  
January 2017

## Pack warning labels

Policy makers should be reassured that pack warning labels are an important element in the comprehensive approach to reducing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smoking and the harm it causes. Pack warning labels are contributing to the knowledge and motivations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers, as they do for the general Australian population.

Pack warning labels increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers' knowledge about the harms of smoking. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers who said at baseline that they often noticed warning labels on their packs were more likely to identify the harms of smoking that have featured on warning labels. But they were no more likely than other smokers to identify harms that have *not* been featured pack warning labels.

Many smokers told us that warning labels stopped them having a smoke when they were about to have one. This forgoing a smoke due to warning labels was associated with becoming worried about health consequences of smoking, developing an interest in quitting and most importantly with attempting to quit. The introduction of new and enlarged warning labels on plain packs in 2012 led to more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers forgoing a smoke because of these warning labels.



## Social determinants

Policy makers and health staff can be more optimistic about the likely impacts of tobacco control activities among the most disadvantaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers, who do not for the most part appear less able to quit. These more disadvantaged smokers have similar potential to gain not only rapid and sustained health benefits from quitting, but also financial benefits and the increased self-esteem that comes from completing a difficult task.

Almost none of the standard baseline socio-economic indicators predicted making or sustaining quit attempts between the surveys. But we did find some evidence that increasing personal empowerment (e.g. getting a job) may lead to at least short-term improvements in quitting.

We also found that more smokers who had insufficient money for food or essentials because of money spent on cigarettes had made a quit attempt and been able to stay quit for one month or more between the surveys. We recommend further research on this complex interplay between price, financial situation, financial stress and quitting, given the importance of price in tobacco control and the potential negative impacts of price rises on those who are unable to successfully quit.

## Presentations

In the last 18 months, we have given presentations about Talking About The Smokes in Perth, Adelaide, Hobart, Melbourne and Wellington (NZ). In Wellington, David Thomas and Pele Bennet assisted the Te Ara Auahi Kore (TAKe) project. The TAKe project is led by Māori researcher Anaru Waa (pictured) and is closely based on Talking About The Smokes.



## Key findings

*We surveyed 2,522 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers and non-smokers between April 2012 and October 2013 from 35 locations (baseline surveys). We resurveyed 49% (849/1721) of the eligible smokers and recent ex-smokers from the baseline survey (follow-up surveys) one year later between August 2013 and August 2014. At the same time as the follow-up surveys, we surveyed a further 597 smokers for the first time.*

### Pack warning labels

- Smokers who reported that warning labels stopped them having a smoke when they were about to have one in the month prior to baseline had 1.5 times the odds of making a quit attempt between surveys when compared with those who reported never doing so or never noticing labels.
- Only smokers first surveyed before plain packaging was introduced were more likely to report stopping smoking due to warning labels at follow-up (19% vs 34%). There was no increase in smokers who were first surveyed during or after the introduction of plain packaging.
- Smokers who reported they had often noticed warning labels on their packs at baseline had 1.8 times the odds of correctly responding to five questions about the health effects of smoking that had featured on packs, but not those that had not featured on packs, when compared to smokers who did not often notice warning labels.



## Social determinants

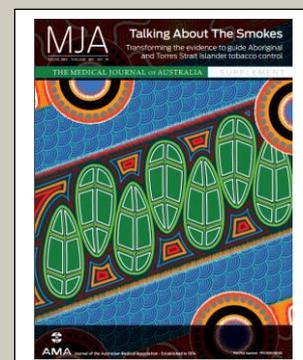
- Almost none of the standard baseline socioeconomic indicators predicted making or sustaining quit attempts between surveys.
- Smokers who became employed between surveys had 1.9 times the odds of making a quit attempt and 3.0 times the odds of staying quit for one month or more. Smokers who began to purchase a home between had 2.3 times the odds of staying quit for one month or more.
- Smokers who had insufficient money for food or essentials because of money spent on cigarettes at baseline had 1.5 times the odds of making a quit attempt and 1.7 times the odds of staying quit for one month or more between surveys.

## For more information

- Nicholson A, Borland R, Bennet P, Davey M, Sarin J, Van der Sterren A, Stevens M, Thomas D. The effect of pack warning labels on knowledge, thoughts and behaviours related to quitting in a national cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers. *Nicotine Tob Res* 2017 Advance Access. Available at: <https://academic.oup.com/ntr/article/doi/10.1093/ntr/ntw396/2871245/The-effect-of-pack-warning-labels-on-quitting-and>
- Thomas D, Panaretto K, Davey M, Briggs V, Borland R. The social determinants and starting and sustaining quit attempts in a national sample of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers. *Aust N Z J Public Health* 2017; Online; doi: 10.1111/1753-6405.12626. Available at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1753-6405.12626/full>

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The baseline series of 15 papers is available at:  
<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2015/202/10/supplement>



Talking about the Smokes is a national research project led by a partnership between Menzies School of Health Research, NACCHO and all its Affiliates, University of Melbourne, and Cancer Council Victoria, together with 34 ACCHSs and the Torres Shire Council. It is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health.