

# Smoke and Vape free workplace

Guide to developing a smoke and vape free workplace policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations



NATIONAL BEST PRACTICE UNIT

**TACKLING  
INDIGENOUS  
SMOKING**

# Why should workplaces have a smoke and vape free policy?

Having a smoke and vape free policy at work (that covers all business locations and work vehicles) shows compliance with the legislation. But this is not the only reason for having a smoke and vape free policy. A smoke and vape free policy sends a strong message to the community that a workplace is committed to providing a healthy, supportive working environment for all staff and visitors.

## Smoke and vape free policies and workforce health

Smoking increases the risk of developing a range of cancers, heart disease and respiratory illness. People exposed to second- and third-hand smoke (passive smoking) are also at risk of developing these health problems, even if they do not smoke. Vaping, or breathing in someone else's vape aerosol (passive vaping) is also harmful. The workforce should be protected from second- and third-hand smoke/vape because it is an environmental hazard. Evidence shows that smoke and vape free workplaces are also more supportive for people who are trying to quit and can even encourage people who smoke/vape to take the first steps to giving up. Smoke and vape free workplace policies are therefore good for everyone's health.

## Smoke and vape free policies and the legislation

Legislation and the legal duty of care also provide a good reason for having and implementing a smoke and vape free workplace policy:

- occupational health and safety laws require employers to protect their staff and any workplace visitors from avoidable health risks such as those posed by passive smoking/vaping;
- all states and territories have laws banning smoking in indoor environments including office buildings, shopping malls, schools and cinemas - these usually cover vaping as well as smoking;
- passive smoking/vaping may be a health risk in outdoor areas as well as indoors. Each state and territory has a different approach for managing smoking and vaping in outdoor areas.

State and Territory government are mainly responsible for smoke and vape free laws, so check your relevant government website for more information.

## What are the steps to developing an effective policy?

This document outlines a best practice process for developing a smoke and vape free policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workplaces.



## Engaging the organisational leadership

The first step for introducing or reviewing any policy is getting the organisation's leadership onboard. All organisations are different and it's important to know how they would like to proceed and who you need to talk to first. In most organisations this will be the CEO, but other members of the executive such as the Chief Operating Officer (COO), if the company has one, or members of the board may also need to be engaged and consulted with in the early stages of developing/reviewing a smoke and vape free policy. A PowerPoint presentation is included in this resource pack that provides the main information you need to share with the organisation's executive. You can download and use the PowerPoint as it is, adapt it into a template of your own or even print out the information to guide a conversation with the organisation's leaders. Once the organisation's executive has given their support, it is a good idea to work with the organisation's management to develop a work plan so that everyone is happy with what is going to happen and when. Use your preferred planning tools to set up the plan, whether this is a Word document, an Excel spreadsheet or an online platform such as Jotform or Google Sheets. Whatever tool you use, make sure you share the plan with the organisation's executive and get their agreement to any changes you need to make in the timeline or activities. We recommend you include the following headers in your workplan:



It will be really important to work together to decide who will lead each part of the process. For example, who will be your main contact for this project? Who will be involved in drafting the initial policy? Is the organisation happy to use the smoke and free policy template provided as part of this resource pack, or do they have an organisational policy template they require you to use? What is the timeline for completing this process (including organisational approvals)?

Think of the work plan as a living document. It needs to be flexible enough to change, because things don't always happen the way we expect them to, but structured enough to guide your work. Part of your plan will be to gather any useful background information to help you understand where the organisation is currently at and what needs to be addressed by the new/updated policy. An environmental scan is a great way to gather this information.

## Conducting an environmental scan

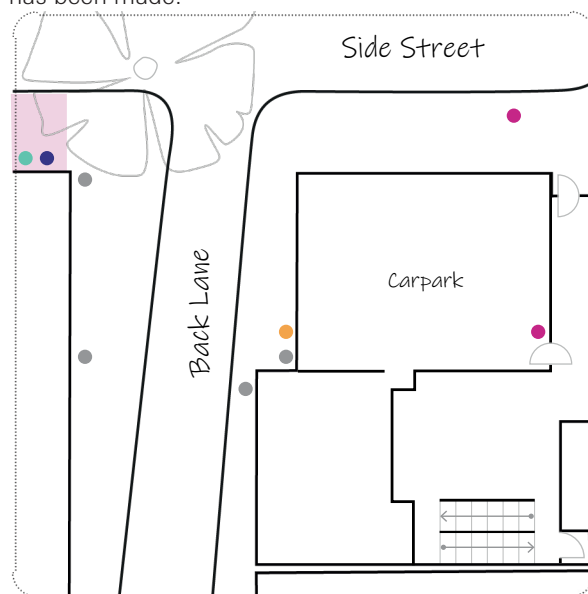
An environmental scan helps you get a good picture of how smoking and vaping is viewed at your organisation and in the community the business services. An Environmental Scan Checklist is provided as part of this resource pack. The checklist asks you to think about:

- Tobacco control activities happening in the region or at the organisation
- Existing organisational policies
- Where people smoke and how this impacts on the workforce, visitors and community more broadly.

To use the checklist, walk around your organisation and answer all the questions on the checklist. As well as observing what is going on, have an informal chat with staff about smoking and vaping at this organisation. Take photos as you go as a visual record. If the organisation has several sites, you will need to do a scan for each one. There is also a space on the Environmental Scan Checklist to draw a map of the organisation to show existing designated smoking areas, as well as where people actually smoke or vape. An example map is provided on the checklist.

You should also get a copy of your organisation's existing policy. Management should be able to provide this. Compare your observation of what people are doing from the environmental scan with what the policy says people should be doing. If you find any differences between the policy and your scan, make a note. You might also want to have a follow-up conversation with staff, to try and work out why the policy is not being followed. You should then go back to your contact for the project and start the process of drafting the new/updated policy.

Keep the environmental scan and use it as a guide for the review/development of the organisation's smoke and vape free policy. It also provides an important record of where the organisation was at when the policy development/review started. Conducting another scan at a later date will show you and the organisation's executive and workforce what progress has been made.



## Consultation and education with staff

Consulting with staff as well as management is an important part of the process of developing a new policy or updating an existing one. Any new policy that will change the way people act at their place of work is always more likely to be supported by staff if they are consulted and have the opportunity to provide input before the policy is finalised. Ensuring staff are part of the change process will give them ownership of the new policy, meaning they are more likely to enable its implementation rather than fight against it. This will make the introduction of the policy a much smoother process. Consulting with staff often begins informally, for example, if you were able to chat to staff when you completed the Environmental Scan Checklist. Once you have the initial draft policy, more in-depth discussion and consultation with staff is necessary. There are several ways you can do this consultation, but we recommend running an educational change workshop.

Change workshops are an opportunity to:

- introduce the draft smoke and vape free policy developed/ reviewed with support from the executive/ management team;
- identify a champion to support the introduction of the new policy and be the point of contact for the workforce for any follow-up;
- share and discuss information around the benefits of smoke and vape free workplaces.

It is important to work with the organisation to identify the most effective approach and timing for the session(s). For example, some organisations might have a weekly staff meeting or protected staff development time that can be used for this session.. The organisation may prefer one long session or several short sessions across a number of weeks. Delivering the information should take around 1.5-2 hours in total. Workshops should be interactive and run using local community and organisational values and preferences. For example, you might deliver a PowerPoint presentation in a meeting room or sit outside and have a yarn with staff. Use any visual props you think will help start the conversation. This might be a set of PowerPoint slides, but it could also be a story board, images showing how smoking and vaping impacts people's health and the environment, videos, or stories of how people benefited from quitting. Check out the TIS website – <https://tacklingsmoking.org.au/resources/resources-to-support-activities-that-work/> for ideas. Whatever resources you use, remember that the workshop should be supportive of all staff and focus on being smoke and vape free at work. This session is not about telling people they should quit. A PowerPoint presentation is included in this resource pack that provides the main information to include in the workshops. You can download and use the PowerPoint as it is, adapt it into a template of your own or, if you prefer, you can develop your own presentation using the format of your choice. Your presentation should include the following topics in your session(s).

## Reasons our workplace should have a smoke and vape free policy:

- Each state/territory has legislation to guide where people can and can't smoke/vape in the workplace. Having a workplace policy shows we are following the legislation;
- Leading by example (especially important for health services);
- Ensuring a smoke and vape free environment is an important part of health and safety;
- Smoke and vape free environments are more supportive for anyone trying to quit;
- Having a strong but supportive policy demonstrates that an organisation has the health and wellbeing of staff at its heart.

### Suggested topics for discussion:

What do you know about any existing smoking/vaping policy at work? Are there many people who smoke or vape in your workplace? Where do people smoke/vape? Are there designated smoking/vaping areas, if so what is the visibility like (any signage)? Do people follow the current policy (why/why not)?

## Harms of smoking/vaping and benefits of being smoke and vape free at work,

- What is in cigarette smoke/vape aerosol;
- What does second-hand smoke/vape do to the body;
- Financial impact of quitting – or even just being smoke/vape free at work;
- Environmental impact (e.g., butts on the ground/in waterways etc.)

### Suggested topics for discussion:

Were you surprised by any of this information? Has it changed how you think about smoking/vaping?

## Introduce the new draft policy and seek feedback on the content.

This is the opportunity for staff to have some input into the policy and how it looks. Explore what people think of the draft policy:

- Are there any possible challenges with implementation? If yes, can the group come up with workable solutions?
- Is anything missing, anything that doesn't make sense?
- What ideas do people have to support the introduction of the policy and help each other be smoke and vape free at work? Ideas to encourage conversation include:
- Replace your smoke/vape break with a different activity, e.g., go for a walk
- Use the 'Keep our place a smoke and vape free space' resources – distraction, hydration, etc.
- Mindfulness and relaxation
- A buddy system so team members support each other
- A workplace champion as a point of contact (discuss how this might look and if this will be useful; identify someone to be the Smoke and Vape free Workplace Champion)

Finally, provide information on where to find support to quit if anyone is already on their quit journey or are thinking about quitting:

- Locally specific support
- Aboriginal Quitline on 13 7848 4
- GP/Dr/AHW for NRT

Draw the session to a close by asking if there are any further questions or comments, then thank everyone for their participation. Ask them to complete the Change Workshop Feedback Survey included in this resource pack before leaving the session.

We recommend organising a follow-up with the staff and executive around 6 weeks after the policy is introduced to see if any additional support is required (e.g., further education sessions, more information about referral pathways).

Once the consultation with staff is complete, you need to go back to the leadership team to discuss staff feedback and make any final changes to the policy based on this consultation. It will then be up to the executive to have the new/updated policy approved through their usual process.

### Implementing the policy

Make sure you have everything ready by the agreed policy start date. It might take some time to get the policy approved, so make sure you leave enough time for your organisation to complete all their processes. Don't worry if the policy implementation date changes several times, or seems to be a long way off. Change can take time, and the time invested in getting the policy right and the whole organisation onboard is time well spent. It may take several rounds of policy drafting and staff consultation and education to develop a policy that everyone is happy to implement. Having a gap between drafting the policy and implementing it also gives staff time to get used to the new policy and begin to plan for how they will be part of putting the new policy into action.

### The Annual Review

Setting a date to review the policy is a good idea. A review allows you and the organisation to see what is working and what isn't. It is also an opportunity to remind people what the policy says and why it is important to have a smoke and vape free policy in the workplace. It should also be a time to celebrate successes, however large or small. Has someone managed to quit recently? Are the people who still smoke now in a routine of being smoke-free at work – and how much money has this saved them? Has anyone extended being smoke-free at work to being smoke-free at home or in their car? Has anyone quit vaping?

The review process should not take as long as the initial work to develop a new/updated policy. You can use the same process, but you should be able to complete this over a few days rather than several months. You might even be able to complete the review in a day if you are able to arrange a day when you can visit the executive and conduct an environmental scan in the morning and catch up with staff in the afternoon.



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The Tackling Indigenous Smoking program has been active for more than a decade. We have seen a significant 9.8% absolute decline in daily tobacco use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples since 2004-05, compared to a 7.5% decline in the general population, leading to many lives saved.

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**Professor Tom Calma AO**  
**FAA National Coordinator**  
**Tackling Indigenous**  
**Smoking**

