06E SMOKING

Key questions to ask

- Why should I address smoking in my workplace?

- What can I do to address smoking in my workplace?

- How do I know if our program has been a success?

- How have others done it?

- Where can I go for more information?

In this section of the Healthy Workplace Resource Toolkit, we look at how you can address smoking in your workplace.

WHY SHOULD I ADDRESS SMOKING IN MY WORKPLACE?

*A **smoke-free worksite*** can bring many positive benefits, for both employers and employees.

For employers, benefits include:

- increasing productivity through:
    - reduced absenteeism from smoking-related health problems
    - reduced presenteeism (employees performing poorly due to attending work when they're not well)
- meeting 'duty of care' responsibilities towards employees, clients and visitors
- generating a positive corporate health image
- reducing the risk of litigation from non-smokers who may develop health problems related to passive smoking
- lowering the risk of workers compensation claims from smoking-related health problems
- potentially reducing fire risks, resulting in lower insurance costs
- complying with legislation including the *Public Health Act 1997* and the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012*.

For employees (both smokers trying to quit and non-smokers), benefits include:

- being able to work in a smoke-free environment, which helps to reduce the number of cigarettes employees consume daily and lowers the overall rate of smoking in the workplace [6, 7, 8, 9, 10]
- having access to a support program, known to help people cut down or stop smoking[11] while improving health, life expectancy and financial wellbeing
- a more pleasant and safer working environment for non-smokers, with protection from the harmful effects of environmental tobacco smoke (the chemicals and toxins released whenever someone smokes a cigarette)
- potentially creating fair working conditions between smokers and non-smokers, as it is generally perceived that smokers take more work breaks than non-smokers.

Smoking fast facts

- In 2011-2012, the rate of smoking amongst Tasmanian adults was 23.2%, significantly above the national average of 18.1%. Smoking rates were higher amongst males (28%) compared to females (18.6%).[1]
- Tobacco smoking costs Australia over $30 billion a year in health, business and social costs. The costs to business alone are over $5.7 billion.[2]
- Smoking is the single greatest cause of preventable death in the developed world.[3]
- Smokers' health problems can impact on their work performance and affect productivity through more frequent sickness-related absences.[4]
- Several years of research shows that cigarette smokers have a higher incidence of health problems and a lower life expectancy than the general population. Smoking causes a range of serious health problems including cancer, heart disease, stroke, asthma, emphysema, vascular disease and damage to most body organs.
- 82% of Australians support measures to ban smoking in the workplace.[5]
- Tobacco smoking not only affects the smoker directly, but has a range of negative health impacts on non-smokers exposed to tobacco smoke. Legislation exists to protect non-smokers from the effects of 'second-hand' or environmental tobacco smoke.

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WHY SHOULD I ADDRESS SMOKING IN MY WORKPLACE?

For more information on the health effects of smoking for both smokers and non-smokers, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from the *Good health. Good business.* website at www.workcover.tas.gov.au/goodhealthgoodbusiness

ⓘ FACT SHEET Health effects of smoking

In Tasmania, there are laws to make sure that employees are protected from the effects of environmental tobacco smoke. Organisations must comply with the requirements of the *Public Health Act 1997*, which prohibits smoking in all indoor and some adjacent outdoor areas. In addition, the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012* requires employers to provide a safe working environment for employees.

For more information on legislation around smoking in the workplace, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from the *Good health. Good business.* website at www.workcover.tas.gov.au/goodhealthgoodbusiness

ⓘ FACT SHEET Smoking-related legislative requirements

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WHAT CAN I DO TO ADDRESS SMOKING IN MY WORKPLACE?

There are two main things you can do to address smoking in your workplace:

1. Develop a smoking cessation support program for your employees

2. Create a smoke-free worksite policy, where the worksite

   ☐ has designated smoke-free areas, or

   ☐ is a totally smoke-free environment.

Whether you do one or both of these things will depend on the needs of your organisation. Regardless of the approach you take, keep the following points in mind:

■ Nicotine is widely recognised as an addictive substance and can cause significant health and social problems to people addicted to smoking. Physical and emotional symptoms of nicotine withdrawal can happen when opportunities to smoke are restricted, so it will be important to provide information and practical support for employees who might be having trouble not smoking during work hours.

■ If your organisation decides to create a smoke-free worksite policy, there are benefits to supplementing this with a smoking cessation support program. A supportive attitude from managers and colleagues, along with access to smoking cessation support, is likely to encourage smokers who want to quit, and is likely to improve cooperation and compliance with the policy.

■ To promote goodwill, and provide employees with the opportunity to trial symptom management options before smoking restrictions occur, develop and implement your cessation support program at or before your policy implementation date.

■ Some smokers may see the introduction of a smoke-free worksite as an opportunity to cut down or even stop smoking. Other smokers might be encouraged to think about their own situation if they are given good information about the benefits of quitting.

Research suggests it is more effective to introduce a totally smoke-free environment with no designated smoking areas.[12]

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WHAT CAN I DO TO ADDRESS SMOKING IN MY WORKPLACE?

1. Developing a smoking cessation support program for your employees

There is no 'one size fits all' approach to smoking cessation. You can consider a range of strategies to support your employees, depending on what best suits your workplace.

For more information about developing smoking cessation support programs, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from the *Good health. Good business.* website at www.workcover.tas.gov.au/goodhealthgoodbusiness

Smoking cessation support

The following table lists examples of strategies and activities that may be useful to address smoking in the workplace. Remember, aim for a mix of activities that target people, place and policy.

2. Creating a smoke-free worksite policy

A smoke-free policy is a formal, written document addressing the issues relating to smoking in your worksite. A formal policy that has been endorsed by managers will:

- provide clear direction to all employees as to why their worksite has become a smoke-free environment
- make it clear what is expected of both the organisation and all employees
- let all staff and visitors know that the organisation takes a firm stance on the issues of smoking and exposure to environmental tobacco smoke.

For more information about developing a smoke-free worksite policy, including a fact sheet, sample templates, brochures, a sample media release and No Smoking signage, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from the *Good health. Good business.* website at www.workcover.tas.gov.au/goodhealthgoodbusiness

Guidelines for developing a smoke-free worksite policy

	Examples of activities targeting smoking	People	Place	Policy
👍	Display information on the health effects of smoking and the benefits of quitting smoking		✓	
👍	Provide promotional material on smoking cessation options (for example, QuitLine)		✓	
👍	Develop a smoke-free worksite policy			✓
👍	Offer flexible working hours to allow employees to attend smoking cessation courses	✓		
👍	Promote and provide access to online smoking cessation support programs		✓	
👍⊕	Arrange in-house support groups for employees attempting to go smoke-free	✓		
👍⊕	Support participation in smoking cessation programs during work hours	✓		
👍⊕	Provide smoking cessation support programs in the workplace	✓		
👍⊕	Subsidise smoking cessation support services and/or medications for employees (for example, nicotine replacement therapy)	✓		

👍 This symbol indicates an easy or low-resource activity.

👍⊕ This symbol indicates a more comprehensively resourced activity.

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HOW DO I KNOW IF OUR PROGRAM HAS BEEN A SUCCESS?

The best way to find out if your program has been a success is to look at the impact of any changes you have made to your worksite. It's a good idea to work out how you are going to do this early on, so you can ask the right questions and collect the right information.

It is essential to collect some information before you start your program, for example:

- What percentage of employees currently smoke?
- How many cigarettes do they smoke?
- Do they smoke at home, work or both?
- Are your employees motivated to quit smoking?

This data will only be useful if it matches your program and its objectives. For example, if the majority of your employees smoke at home and not at work, then it may be a higher priority to focus on smoking cessation, rather than implementing a smoke-free policy.

The baseline data you collect will be essential when you come to evaluate your program, as you can ask the same questions and see whether the figures are different. Then you will be able to identify if your program has been effective, or whether you need to change your program to provide better support to your employees.

There are many questions you can ask that will help you evaluate your program, including:

- Is there understanding and acceptance of your smoke-free policy (if you have one)?
  - ☐ Are employees and site visitors aware of the policy and its requirements?
  - ☐ Does your signage get your message across (e.g. do you have the right number and type of signs, are they still in place and legible)?
  - ☐ Is there staff support for the policy?
  - ☐ Are site visitors aware of the policy?

- Are your employees making good use of the support offered as part of your program?
  - ☐ What is the level of employee participation in your program?
  - ☐ How many employees have taken up nicotine withdrawal support (if that option was provided)?
- Can you see that employees and visitors have accepted the requirements of your policy and/or program?
  - ☐ Is there evidence of smoking on site (e.g. cigarette butts have been found, employees or visitors have been seen smoking)?
  - ☐ What are employees saying about the policy and the expectation that they will comply with its requirements?
- What has been the effect of the program on employees?
  - ☐ Has the percentage of smokers changed since implementation (needs baseline data)?
  - ☐ Has the average cigarette consumption changed since implementation (needs baseline data)?
  - ☐ What do your employees think about the program (do they think it has been effective)?

How you collect this information will differ depending on your organisation's size and regional spread. There is a range of data collection methods that you could try, such as surveys, interviews and discussion groups.

For more information on evaluating your program, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from the *Good health. Good business.* website at www.workcover.tas.gov.au/goodhealthgoodbusiness

FACT SHEET

A simple guide to evaluation

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HOW HAVE OTHERS DONE IT?

Port Arthur Historic Site, Tasmania

The Port Arthur Historic Site set a new benchmark in workplace health and visitor comfort when it became the first major tourist attraction in Tasmania to go smoke-free on 1 November 2011.

Carol Armstrong, the Human Resource Manager who had been responsible for planning the change, said the move was inevitable.

> 'Our visitor feedback regularly showed negative comments about smoking on the site. We also wanted Port Arthur to be a place where staff and visitors were safeguarded from the health effects of passive smoking, and the environment was not degraded by litter.'

Previously, staff and visitors had been able to light up whenever they wanted. Now there are two designated smoking areas (including one in the carpark), and smokers are only permitted to smoke during their award rest breaks.

Ms Armstrong said as well as being a worksite, the site was also a family environment. School and educational groups were regular visitors, so it made sense to present healthy behaviour models. 'With the World Heritage listing in July last year, we also considered it important to follow best practice.'

Some staff had expressed concerns about telling visitors to 'butt out', but Ms Armstrong said education sessions and role-play had been helpful to practice a polite approach to the situation. There was also an emphasis on informing visitors as much as possible, with signage on site, verbal advice at the ticket counter, and information on tickets and in brochures.

Port Arthur Historic Site employs 130 permanent staff, with an additional 40 in peak tourist season. For the staff who were smokers, support was provided to help them manage their smoking, or use this as an opportunity to quit altogether.

Staff have access to a subsidy of $250 for nicotine replacement therapy for up to three months, with the local medical centre and pharmacy on board to provide advice, support and the subsidised smoking cessation products. These products manage cravings during work hours and assist smokers who want to stop smoking.

An employee has been trained to deliver smoking education groups, and Quit group sessions were run in February – an opportune time to coincide with New Year's resolutions, but after the disruption of the festive season.

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HOW HAVE OTHERS DONE IT?
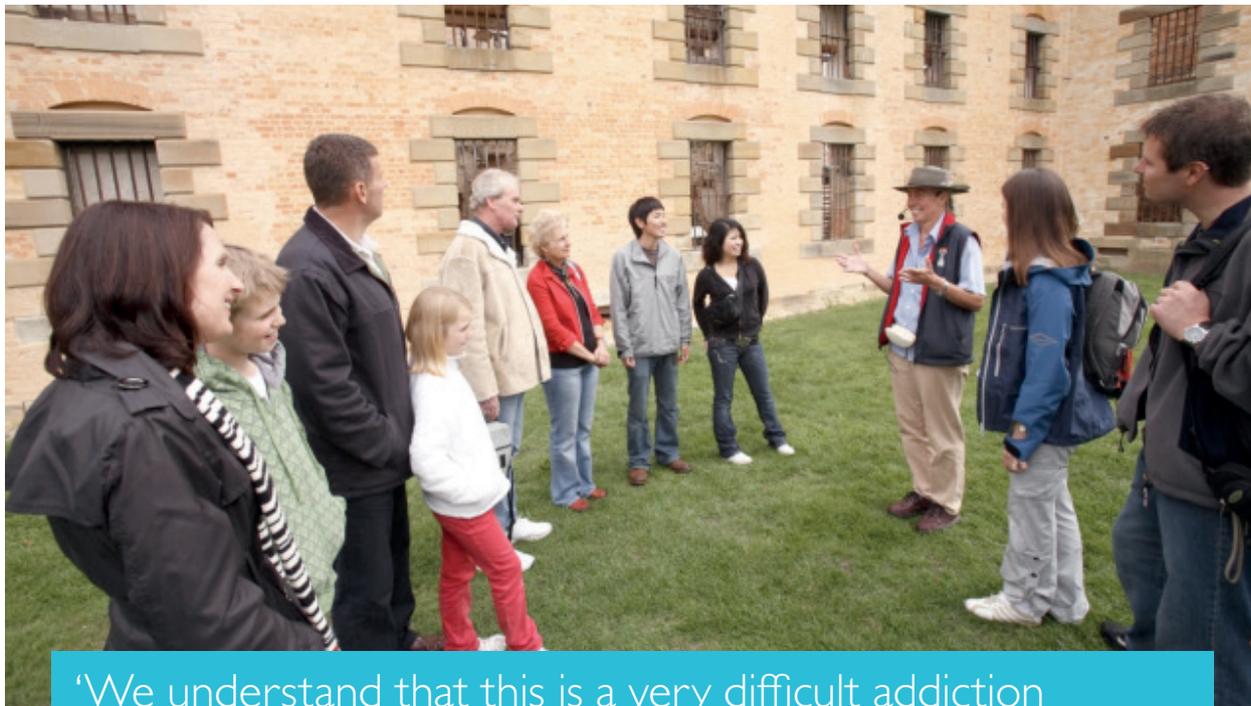
'We understand that this is a very difficult addiction to give up and therefore our approach is one of support and education.'

Ms Armstrong said that the nature of Port Arthur differed from many other workplaces because there were external as well as internal stakeholders to prepare for.

The other Historic Sites managed by the Management Authority – Cascades Female Factory and Coal Mines at Saltwater River – became smoke-free in July 2012.

In offering advice to others, Ms Armstrong said 'I've learned it takes much longer than you'd think. It's more than just putting up a sign. It takes leadership, commitment and perseverance to make it happen, but there are very good reasons to go smoke-free and the Board and Executive were one hundred per cent behind it all along.'

While there was some resistance from a handful of staff during the policy implementation period, the majority of employees were strongly supportive of a smoke-free worksite, and resistance largely evaporated after introduction of the policy.

A resource kit to support implementation of the smoke-free policy, provided by the Department of Health and Human Services, proved useful in planning the change.

Union workplace delegates provided valuable input into the development of the policy, and were not opposed to the policy introduction.

If you would like more information on making your workplace smoke-free, contact the Health and Wellbeing Advisory Service on 1300 776 572 or visit www.workcover.tas.gov.au

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WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

There are several organisations that can assist you with smoking cessation programs and information for employees.

For a list of these organisations, their contact details and the services they can provide, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from the *Good health. Good business.* website at www.workcover.tas.gov.au/ goodhealthgoodbusiness

FACT SHEET — Where to go for more information - Smoking
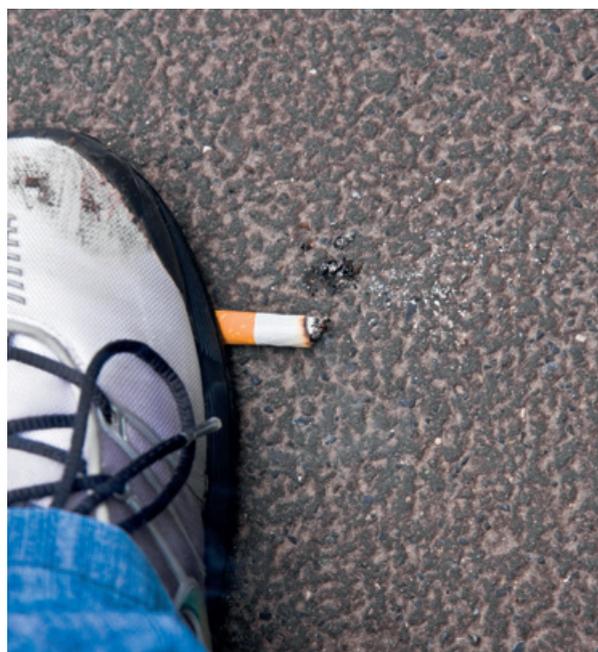
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