

Project Feedback

In 2007, ARC awarded two grants to Aboriginal organisations determined to reduce smoking rates in their communities. In 2010 the projects are at differing stages of completion with the finalisation of data analysis, production of training materials and the writing and submission of findings.



In NSW, the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) BREATHE Project was awarded by ARC

\$490,200 to implement a project to trial the impact of employing and supporting

specialist Tobacco Control Workers within Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) in order to implement innovative, community based approaches to reduce smoking rates and smoking related disease in Aboriginal communities. The Cancer Council of NSW and the Heart Foundation were also partners in this project.

The research project name BREATHE stands for Building Research Evidence to address Aboriginal Tobacco Habits Effectively. This indeed is what has happened. To achieve this, BREATHE worked with 12 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) to implement a 12 month intervention period where financial and practical support was provided to the six intervention site ACCHS



The BREATHE Team with Tom Calma, the national coordinator for tackling Indigenous smoking

to support the activities of a local tobacco control worker. These roles continue after the completion of the intervention period.

Post-intervention data collection has occurred at both control and intervention ACCHS sites between June and November 2010, and included a repeat of baseline assessments. At each ACCHS site, data collection has included: an exit survey of ACCHS clients; a structured assessment of ACCHS tobacco control capacity; a local environmental scan; a staff focus group; and a staff survey.

Although final write ups and feedback are not yet completed the BREATHE project through lessons already learnt has

been able to contribute to informing Aboriginal tobacco control policy and practice both nationally and in NSW and Nationally through:

- The AH&MRC preparing a submission based on BREATHE project experiences for the Preventative Health Taskforce with the BREATHE project being referred to in the tobacco control part of their final report
- BREATHE project team members participating on the national Tobacco Technical Reference Group and the Campaign Reference Group to advise the Commonwealth Department of Health Ageing regarding implementation of the Tackling Smoking component of the COAG Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health National Partnership
- The AH&MRC receiving significant funding from NSW Health for the years 2010-2013 to develop and implement a large scale Aboriginal tobacco control program in NSW, to build on BREATHE project activities. This program has been named A-TRAC (Aboriginal Tobacco Resistance and Control) and areas of tobacco control activity include: Supporting ACCHS; developing accredited training packages through the Aboriginal Health College; social marketing; research and evaluation; policy development and coordination.



The Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia's (ACHWA) "Beyond the Big Smoke: a clear vision for Aboriginal tobacco control in Western Australia" project was co-financed by ARC with the Western Australian Health Promotion Foundation, 'Healthway'. The project implemented a range of strategies designed to have a positive impact on smoking behaviour amongst staff and user populations of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS). These strategies included:

- Collaboration between ACCHS and other organisations to improve capacity to respond to tobacco control issues in Aboriginal populations.
- Identification of smoking behaviour amongst staff and user populations of ACCHS.
- Promotion of tobacco control through increased use of brief interventions and enhanced awareness of smoking impacts amongst the ACCHS populations.

- The encouragement of ACCHS to actively support and promote tobacco control policies and strategies.
- Consolidation and co-ordination of recent tobacco control initiatives targeting Aboriginal populations.

As a joint activity between the Kimberly Aboriginal Medical Services Council (KAMSC) in Broome and AHCWA in Perth the project has been able to provide a state wide Tobacco Control program to Aboriginal communities throughout Western Australia.

The successes can be seen in the three distinct target groups:

The organizational level

In both regions the work with the boards and CEO's of the ACCHS to review and implement smoking policy was generally well received and many have become smoke free services.

The Staff level

There has been a reduction in the number of staff who smoke. There has also been an increase in the confidence of staff to raise the issue of tobacco use with fellow staff and clients. The development of further training will strengthen this.

The Aboriginal community level

There has been an increase in the awareness of the dangers of tobacco use and the benefits of quitting. People have easier access to support services in relation to smoking cessation

Through the project the ACCHS have been able to contribute to the recent debate on effective strategies to address tobacco use and its impact on Aboriginal health. The work of the Beyond the Big Smoke project has contributed to the Council of Australian Governments (COAGs) initiatives to narrow the gap in Aboriginal health.

Three training modules on tobacco cessation were developed during the project; these have been institutionalized into the AHCWA training and development program for existing and new staff.

The project is fortunate to have had 2 dynamic Tobacco Control Officers Mena Lewis and Christine Ivan working out of Broome and Perth respectively. Together they have broken new ground for Aboriginal Tobacco Cessation programs to take hold in WA.



Mena Lewis



Christine Ivan

