



THE FUTURE IS SMOKE FREE

Your guide to supporting
young Tasmanians to
be smoke free



Acknowledgements

This guide is for those who work with young people such as teachers, school nurses, youth and health workers.

It has been designed by **Smoke free generation – be a part of it!**, a collaboration of service providers who want to protect young Tasmanians from the harmful effects of tobacco use.



Our aim is to discourage young people from taking up smoking and help those who have already started smoking to quit.

Visit us at smokefreegeneration.org.au

Helping young Tasmanians to be smoke free

Working with young people today, it can seem like smoking is the least of their problems. But in reality, the effects of tobacco use may become their most significant problem.

'The Future is Smoke Free' is a guide to help reflect on your work practice, work environment and your workplace policies and processes.

As most people are aware, tobacco is a highly addictive drug, and this applies to young people too.

When working with young people, you have a duty of care to ensure their environment is not harmful to their health and wellbeing. You can do this by making the reduction of tobacco use by young people a high priority.

Young people's behaviour is influenced by adults. The nature of your role and relationship with a young person means you play a significant part in influencing their decision making and behaviour.

Strong messaging and modelling that challenges tobacco use is the best example. Combined with education, it is likely to have a positive effect on the smoking behaviour of the young people you work with.

This messaging and modelling also applies to the use of electronic cigarettes used for vaping.

The long-term health impacts of vaping are unknown and electronic cigarettes are not risk free. This includes products with and without nicotine.

This guide refers to smoking and tobacco, as well as electronic cigarettes and vaping. These are not appropriate for anyone to use, particularly young people.

It is also important to be aware that many young people may not consider themselves as smokers but are addicted to nicotine from mixing cannabis with tobacco. Any reduction in cannabis use can also contribute to increased nicotine cravings.

As with tobacco smoking, young people should be encouraged not to use electronic cigarettes.

Like tobacco, in Tasmania it is illegal to sell or supply electronic cigarettes to anyone under the age of 18.

Smoking by young Tasmanians

Nearly all tobacco use begins during adolescence and young adulthood.

The average age most Australians take up smoking is around 16 years.

Smoking affects many parts of the body, inside and outside. Some of the effects happen straight away such as smelly hair and breath, stained teeth and fingers, less oxygen to the brain and lungs, being prone to more coughs and colds, and increased heart rate and blood pressure.

Other effects take longer to occur such as gum disease leading to tooth loss, cancers, stomach ulcers, dry and discoloured skin, infertility or impotence and poorer muscle tone.

Tobacco use causes more ill health and premature death than any other drug used in Australia. If cigarette smokers start smoking as teenagers and do not quit, eventually tobacco will kill two out of three of them.

Many young people who start smoking think they can stop whenever they want. Unfortunately, the younger a person starts smoking, the harder it can be to quit.

Nicotine acts on the brain and creates feelings of pleasure or satisfaction. Young brains are still developing until at least the age of 25. That is why young people are more vulnerable to addiction. Nicotine can also train the brain to be more easily addicted to other drugs and affect memory and concentration.

In Tasmania, five per cent of school students aged between 12 and 17 years are current smokers. They smoke an average of 13 cigarettes a week whether male or female.



Smoking rates increase in early adulthood with over 20% of Tasmanians aged 18 to 24 years being current smokers.

Young people who start smoking are more likely to:

- get addicted to nicotine
- become lifetime smokers
- get diseases caused by tobacco use
- die prematurely from diseases caused by tobacco use.

Duty of care and rights of the child

It is important to avoid exposing young people to harm, injury or exploitation.

Everyone working with young people has a duty of care to talk to them about the effects and harms of any drug, including tobacco.

Supporting tobacco or electronic cigarette use, or acting in a way that promotes, encourages or condones it, compromises a worker's duty of care by exposing young people to potential harm.

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989* states "in all actions concerning children, the bests interest of the child shall be a primary consideration."

These rights are best respected when a worker:

- avoids smoking in the company of a young person
- raises smoking with a young person as a health issue
- supports smoke-free environments.



Boundaries

The *Youth Ethics Framework for Tasmania* states “the relationship between a youth sector worker and a young person is a professional relationship, with clear boundaries, that is intentionally limited to protect the young person. Youth sector workers will behave in a way that is consistent with these boundaries.”

Smoking in the presence of, or with young people, blurs or crosses professional boundaries and negatively impacts the current and future health and wellbeing of young people.

What can you do?

1. Be a positive role model

Ways you can develop a supportive and mentoring relationship with young people include:

- be a non-smoker
- if asked about your tobacco use, listen and reflect on the reasons you are being asked – discuss smoking, not smokers
- advocate for smoke free environments with young people
- support your colleagues to quit smoking
- if you do smoke, try to quit smoking
- do not smoke or vape around, in view of or with young people
- do not give cigarettes or electronic cigarettes to young people



- do not use tobacco as a tool for engaging with young people
- do not give positive messages about smoking or vaping to young people.

2. Understand what influences smoking uptake

Many factors can influence a decision to smoke, such as:

- Environmental – coming from an environment where lots of people smoke, where a person lives, how they engage with or are engaged by schools, unemployment, exposure to tobacco industry influence and promotion, price and ease of access to tobacco.
- Social – family (particularly parents) and peer groups who smoke can influence young people's smoking. Young people tend to overestimate smoking prevalence by their peers.
- Individual – beliefs about smoking that are image related, the misconception that smoking relieves stress, the perception that negative effects or health impacts are not relevant, addiction, low self-value or not feeling accepted by peers.

It is important to recognise the powerful influence of social settings where young people may feel pressured to smoke. You can provide opportunities for young people to discuss the pressures they face to experiment with drugs, including tobacco, and the complex factors that can impact on decision making and behavior. Do this in an open and non-judgmental manner.



3. Support young people to quit

You can increase the young person's knowledge about smoking.

Many young people underestimate the magnitude and relevance of the health risks involved. They also do not understand what addiction means and are unaware of the powerful effects of nicotine. Most young people think they can quit anytime or before they become addicted.

Like many adults who smoke, young people may believe that smoking relieves stress. However, smoking only relieves the stress of nicotine withdrawal. It does not relieve any other stress.

If there is a discussion about tobacco use, provide an opportunity for young people to explore the good and bad things about smoking.

Highlight how smoking:

- can affect their social life
- negatively impact their finances
- reduce their fitness
- make them smell or taste like tobacco
- does not relieve stress.



Empower young people to become involved in tobacco control issues such as by supporting smoke free environments.

If a young person shows interest in quitting or trying to reduce their smoking, discuss their concerns with them. Validate any challenges and support them through the change.

Changing to a low tar or nicotine brand cigarette is not a less harmful option.

4. Encourage young people to be smoke free

Young Tasmanians tell us options available to help them quit are generally adult focused. That is why when working with young people, it is important for you to have an understanding and knowledge about the options that may better suit young people.

Quitting is a process and not an event. Most people try several times before they quit for good. Relapses are normal but can be discouraging. Encourage young people to see the benefit in trying again, it's worth it.

Young people may decide to quit by cutting down slowly. The language you use may be helpful in this instance, for example instead of talking about quitting you could discuss ways to increase their smoke free time.

They may also decide to quit by not buying cigarettes, delaying their smoking, going cold turkey or quitting with a friend. There are a variety of nicotine replacement therapy products and medications to help with quitting.

Be open and supportive to the varied options.

When a young person stops smoking, they may have some withdrawal symptoms. These can be reduced with nicotine replacement therapies (NRT) and medications. As symptoms pass, the young person will feel less stressed.

Remind the young person that withdrawal symptoms are a sign the body is repairing itself. Encourage young people who experience withdrawal to see these as signs of recovery. They may be uncomfortable, but this should only last two to four weeks. There are constructive ways to deal with these '*recovery symptoms*'.

To get the latest information on local services and resources to support a young person to quit smoking visit smokefreeneration.com.au

5. Acquire knowledge and develop skills

Service managers can increase opportunities for in-service training to ensure all staff have appropriate knowledge and skills. This is an important factor in preventing smoking uptake and supporting smoking cessation. The smokefreeneration.org.au website is a great place to start.

Familiarise yourself with the Tasmanian Quitline **13 QUIT (13 7848)** and their approach to supporting young people.

Tobacco use in adolescence is associated with other risky behaviours including drug use.

Keep up to date with smoking rates and other tobacco issues that relate to young people. The 18 to 24 age group has the highest smoking rate in Tasmania and remains a significant concern.

6. Advocate for and support smoke free environments

Smoke free policies and workplaces result in fewer adults smoking in front of young people. A smoke free environment may help young people not to start smoking and could encourage smokers to stop.

In Tasmania, the *Public Health Act 1997* requires all indoor areas of workplaces to be smoke free and enables workplaces to voluntarily extend this to include outdoor areas.

For events including young people, talk to event organisers about the health consequences of smoking and the benefit of being smoke free.

7. Support tobacco control laws

Laws that ban the sale and supply of tobacco to children and the promotion of tobacco products aim to prevent the uptake of smoking by young people.

Support these laws by not supplying tobacco or electronic cigarettes to young people you work with.

Make efforts to inform parents or other adults of the legal implications and health risks of supplying tobacco products to children.

Report retailers or any person you are aware of that sells or supplies tobacco to people under the age of 18 years to the **Public Health Hotline** on **1800 671 738**.



95%

**OF YOUNG
TASMANIANS
DON'T SMOKE***

*Statistics and trends in this guide are from the National and State-based Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug (ASSAD) Survey, 2017

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