



GUIDE TO SUPPORTING A *Smoke-free* WORKPLACE

A guide for healthier,
smoke-free work
environment

CONTENTS

The importance of quitting smoking	3
Benefits for workplaces which support quitting smoking	4
Implementing a Smoke-free Workplace Policy	5
Quit Smoking Support Strategies	6



The Importance of Quitting Smoking

Benefits for Individuals

Quitting smoking is the best thing you will ever do for your health.

Tobacco smoking harms almost every organ in your body. It is a leading cause of death and illness in NSW resulting in around 6,850 deaths and 60,250 hospitalisations in 2017-18. Smoking is a major risk factor for many diseases and health conditions including coronary heart disease, stroke, peripheral vascular disease, and many cancers. When you quit smoking, you reduce the risk of these life threatening diseases.

One in every two smokers will die early as a result of being a smoker. Many long term smokers will die in middle age due to smoking related illnesses.¹

The good news is that there are many health and financial benefits that come from quitting. These benefits start straight away so that after only a few weeks without smoking your risk of heart attack begins to reduce and your lung function improves making breathing and exercise easier.

Quitting at any age is worth doing and will increase your life expectancy and improve your quality of life.

- In 12 hours – excess carbon monoxide is out of your blood, your heart rate slows and your blood pressure becomes more stable
- In 5 days – most nicotine is out of your body
- In 1 week – your sense of taste and smell improves
- In 3 months – your lungs regain the ability to clean themselves and your lung function begins to improve
- In 1 year – a pack-a-day smoker will save around \$10,000²

If you are a parent, quitting will also benefit the health of your children. A smoke-free home and car protects children from 'second-hand smoke' and lowers their risk of many disorders such as ear infections, asthma and allergies.

Quitting prior to surgery will help you to heal quicker with less complications



Benefits for Workplaces which Support Quitting Smoking

1 Health reasons

Over a one-year period, about 75% of smokers will try to change their smoking behavior by making either a quit attempt or reducing the amount they smoke.³ Supporting quitting smoking is the best thing you can do for the health of your workers. Supporting quitting smoking can also reduce the amount of passive smoking at a workplace, which has health benefits for the non-smokers at your workplace.

Passive smoking is the breathing in of smoke that comes off the end of a burning cigarette or the smoke that is exhaled by a nearby smoker. This smoke is referred to as second-hand smoke or passive smoke. The health effects of passive smoking are now well documented. Long-term exposure to second-hand smoke can cause heart disease and lung cancer. Exposure to second-hand smoke can also cause asthma attacks.

2 Legal reasons

There are a number of legal reasons for introducing a smoke-free workplace policy:

- **NSW Smoke-free Environment Act 2000:** smoking is prohibited in a number of enclosed public places including workplaces and other business premises such as professional, trade, commercial and other business premises, shopping centres, theatres, childcare facilities etc.

- **NSW Work Health and Safety Act 2011:** persons with management or control of a workplace must ensure, within reason that the workplace is without risks to the health and safety of any person.

The health effects of passive smoking are clear. Employers have legal obligations to ensure that indoor or enclosed working environments are free of tobacco smoke. Employers who allow smoking in their workplace are at risk of being sued either by employees or members of the public who suffer ill health as a result of being exposed to passive smoking.

3 Economic reasons

There are a number of financial benefits in going smoke-free. These include reduced cleaning and refurbishment costs, potential for reduced insurance costs, reduced risk of litigation and lower fire risk.

Workplaces may also experience reduced costs and absenteeism, increased productivity and a healthy, positive image for their workplace.



Implementing a Smoke-free Workplace Policy

Inform and consult with your staff

The best place to start is to inform your staff and consult with those who are interested in being involved in the policy. Maximum support for the policy will result from full consultation with all staff. Many workplaces can use existing staff representative groups, staff meetings, occupational health and safety committees and other workplace forums.

Promote awareness of the policy

Use meetings, newsletters, intranet other communication platforms to promote the policy. If relevant, include a copy of the policy in employee orientation packs and staff handbooks.

Smoking areas

There is no legal obligation to provide designated smoking areas. If it is decided that smoking areas will be provided, they need to be:

- located outdoors
- clearly designated and well-ventilated with no possibility that the resultant smoke will contaminate indoor areas
- located away from through traffic and where people may be required to work
- compliant with requirements of the Smoke-free Environment Act 2000

Smoking breaks

There is no legal obligation to provide smoking breaks. It is recommended that smoking breaks (that are in addition to the normal breaks taken by staff) be discouraged.⁴

For a sample smoke-free workplace policy, go to [Cancer Council NSW's going smoke-free: recommendations for the workplace](#) resource.



Quit Smoking Support Strategies

1. NSW Quitline 13 7848 (13 QUIT)

NSW Quitline is a free, confidential and individually tailored telephone service to assist smokers in the process of quitting smoking. Quitline advisors have specialist training to support smokers with preparing to quit, avoiding slip-ups and staying quit.

Callers to the NSW Quitline can receive a free 'Quit Kit', talk to an advisor or choose to join the free call-back service. Quitline services and resources are available in Arabic, Vietnamese and Chinese (Cantonese/Mandarin).

The NSW Aboriginal Quitline provides culturally sensitive support to assist smokers to quit.

For online support visit icanquit.com.au. You can request a call, and find ideas and forums to help you quit.

Your workplace can support workers to quit smoking by allowing them to call Quitline (or arrange to be contacted by Quitline) during work hours.

2. Provide information and self-help materials

Support workers to quit smoking by providing them with information on the health benefits of quitting, smoking cessation services, quitting methods, understanding triggers and preventing relapse.

Provide workers with this information by:

- Displaying posters and factsheets on message boards and in common areas (Download resources from health.nsw.gov.au/tobacco/Pages/publications-resources.aspx).
- Include articles on quitting smoking in your staff newsletters and staff emails.
- Order 'Quit Kits' from NSW Quitline (Call 13 7848 or visit www.icanquit.com.au) and distribute to workers who want to quit smoking.
- Refer workers to local smoking cessation support services, telephone counselling and support groups.
- If needed, download resources from the Multicultural Communications website.

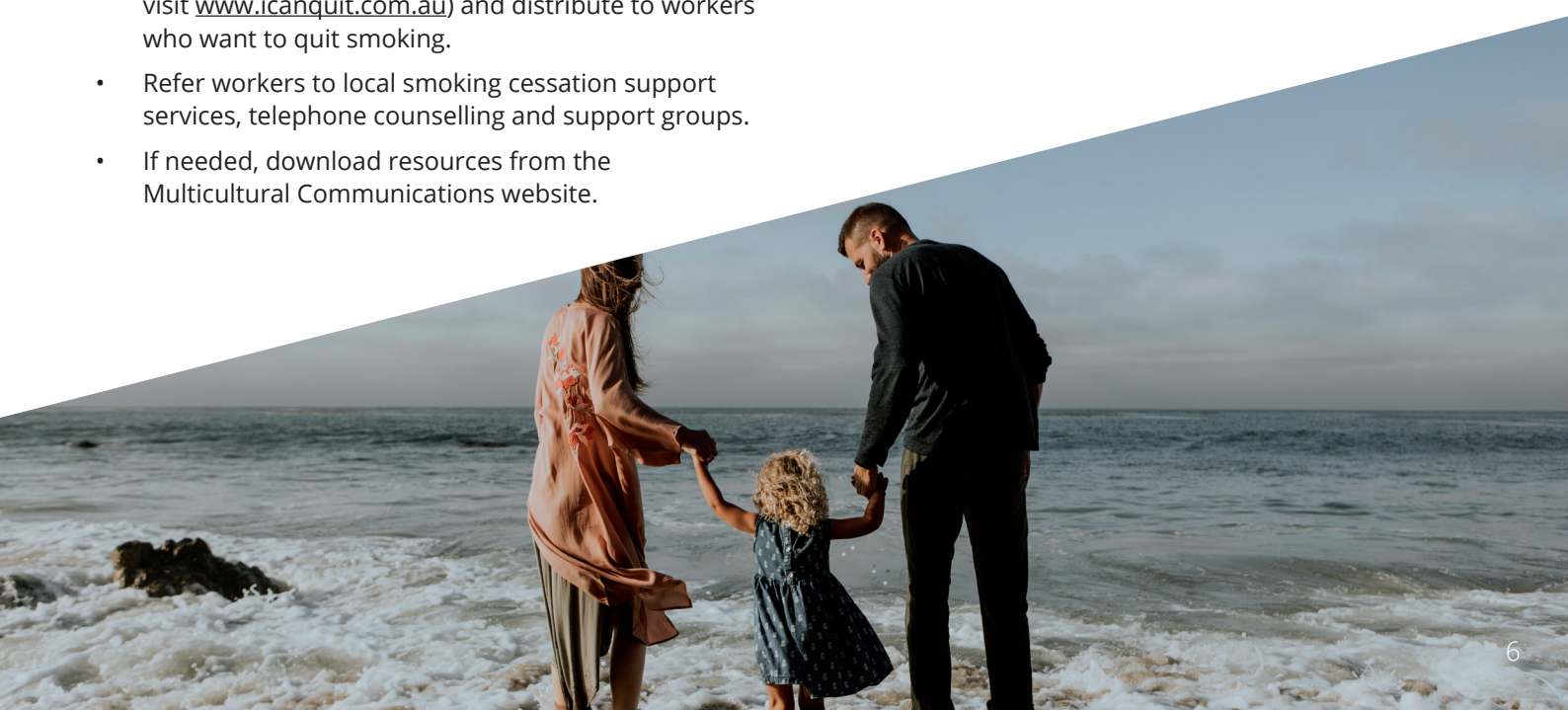
3. Nicotine Replacement Therapy

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is a safe and effective way to quit smoking. NRT has a measured amount of nicotine to help wean smokers off their addiction and reduce nicotine withdrawal symptoms and cravings. Research indicates that NRT can increase the chances of quitting smoking by 50 – 70% compared to unassisted quitting⁵.

A range of NRT products are available including patches, gum, lozenges, mouth spray, oral strips, and inhalers.

NRT is available over the counter and some NRT patches are available at a cheaper price on prescription through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). Talk to your GP or pharmacist for more information.

NRT can have side-effects and may not be suitable for everyone. It is important that smokers discuss their NRT requirements with their doctor or pharmacist. Support workers to do this by allowing flexible working arrangements or time off for appointments.



4. Non-nicotine medication

There are currently two non-nicotine medications available in Australia to help people stop smoking:

- Bupropion: An oral prescription drug to reduce cravings and other withdrawal symptoms.
- Varenicline: An oral prescription drug that reduces withdrawal symptoms and reduces the satisfying effects of smoking.

Smokers should always talk to their doctor about the appropriateness of these medications. They are not suitable for all smokers and some have serious side-effects.

Provide flexible working arrangements to encourage workers to speak to their doctor to help decide which product is best for them.

5. Smoking cessation interventions and workplace training

Smoking cessation interventions and workplace training to help workers quit smoking is available in NSW. The service can be tailored to meet your organisation's requirements. Services include:

- Smoking policy advice
- Seminars on quitting smoking
- Support quit groups
- Advice and counselling on quitting smoking
- Smoking cessation training
- Attendance at workshops and health fairs.

Providing training on Health and Wellbeing or Occupational Health & Safety in Smoking Cessation Skills or Group Behaviour Therapy can also be helpful.



6. Websites and smartphone apps

Provide workers with links to a number of websites and mobile applications for information and support.

iCanQuit.com.au: an online support community providing resources, discussion forums and stories from people who have successfully quit smoking. Online 'Quit Kits' can also be downloaded for free.

Quit Coach: free online tool developed to assist smokers to quit and stay smoke free. By answering questions about smoking habits and lifestyle, QuitCoach will provide useful ideas and suggestions.

Visit www.quitcoach.org.au.

My QuitBuddy app: a free, personalised app to help quit smoking. Smokers can set their own goals, record their reasons for quitting, and include photos and recordings of loved ones.

Participants receive motivational tips, share success stories, celebrate milestones and can use the quit savings calculator to see how much money they have saved. My QuitBuddy is available for download on Apple, Windows and Android smart phones.

More information is available at www.quitnow.gov.au/internet/quitnow/publishing.nsf/Content/quit-buddy.

¹ Benefits of Quitting Smoking – Centre for Population Health. Accessed 17 February 2020. <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/tobacco/Pages/benefits-of-quit-ting.aspx>

² Quit Victoria. The Health Benefits of Quitting Smoking. Accessed 17 February 2020, <https://www.quit.org.au/articles/the-health-benefits-of-quit-ting-smoking/>

³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. National Drug Strategy Household Survey detailed report: 2013. Tobacco chapter. Online data tables. Table 3.14: Changes to smoking behaviour, smoker(s) aged 14 years or older, by sex, 2007 to 2013 2014.

⁴ Going smoke-free: Recommendations for the workplace. Cancer Council NSW. Accessed 17 February 2020. <https://www.cancercouncil.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Workplace-Going-smoke-free-Recommendations-12-02-version-updated-June-2012-for-CCN-web-site-3-June-2012.pdf>

⁵ Stead LF, Perera R, Bullen C, Mant D, Hartmann-Boyce J, Cahill K, Lancaster T. Nicotine replacement therapy for smoking cessation. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2012, Issue 11. Art. No.: CD000146. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD000146.pub4.

