

# Pilot program finds success among smoking prisoners

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Some participants started smoking when they came to prison with boredom and the many stresses of prison like being away from family making it difficult to quit, Mr Khera says. Credit: Thomas Hawk

A pilot quit smoking program trialled on prisoners in the Goldfields has

helped quash the inmate's nicotine dependency, thereby laying the foundation for smoke-free prisons throughout WA.

The Cancer Council WA's Fresh Start workplace quitting program was adapted to 15 inmates in the Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison (EGRP), whose population is predominately Aboriginal.

The researchers measured participant's addiction by how many cigarettes they smoked daily and the time they had their first cigarette after waking.

The program has been hailed a success after all [participants](#) cut down the number of cigarettes they smoked daily.

More than 50 per cent of participants were also recorded lighting up later and Carbon Monoxide levels fell in both males and females.

Researchers visited the participants weekly for 90 minute sessions using interview and motivation techniques aimed at quitting.

Nicotine patches were not offered, though individuals could buy them from the canteen, according to Kalgoorlie-based Bega Garnbirringu Health Services regional tobacco co-ordinator Sachin Khera.

The cost of [nicotine patches](#) were a severely limiting factor.

"We just had to focus on the habitual and emotional dependency and talk about the chemical addiction, but couldn't add to it with medication," he says.

"A lot of them have other health complications which means some medications are not suitable."

Some participants started smoking when they came to [prison](#) with boredom and the many stresses of prison like being away from family making it difficult to quit, Mr Khera says.

## **Government not budging on banning smokes**

Health advocates want the pilot program rolled out across the state in preparation for a prison smoke prohibition but will have to overcome a major sticking point.

The WA Government refuses to consider it, with Corrective Services Minister Joseph Francis saying he has no intention of banning smoking behind bars.

Banning smoking in prisons would bring WA into line with Victoria, the Northern Territory and Tasmania and with South Australia which goes smoke free in 2016.

Victorian authorities refused to back-down when the cigarette ban was pinpointed as the cause of the July riots at Melbourne's Ravenhall remand centre.

The cancer council will continue to advocate for the new EGRP, opening early 2016, to be WA's first smoke free prison, according to the council's regional education officer Pam Foulkes-Taylor.

But she concedes it seems unlikely.

All of WA's prisons need to go smoke-free if it is going to work because at any one time up to 30 per cent of prisoner are transferring between prisons, she says.

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