

Stress not a barrier to quitting the smokes

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Stress may not be a major long-term obstacle to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people quitting smoking, as previously believed, according to new research released by Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) today.

The study found that more smokers who reported being stressed at

baseline made quit attempts and stayed quit for longer in the next year, contrary to past research that mainly reported smokers' perceptions that [stress](#) caused them to go back to smoking.

Forming part of the national Talking About The Smokes study led by Menzies in partnership with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, the 759 study participants completed baseline surveys and follow-up surveys a year later.

Many health professionals and [smokers](#) believe that smoking relieves stress. But this relief may be merely because smoking a cigarette relieves the recurring symptoms of nicotine withdrawal caused by the time elapsed since their previous cigarette.

Study leader, Menzies' Professor David Thomas says health staff can emphasise the research evidence of the benefits to stress management, [mental health](#) and well-being that come with successfully quitting smoking.

"Being more stressed or depressed could be seen as a reason to advise a smoker to quit rather than to put it off," Prof Thomas said.

"This is very important in these stressful times, and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who experience more stressful events.

"Quitting smoking is always a good first step in improving your health and can increase your confidence to take on bigger problems."

Just under two in five (37 percent) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 and over smoke daily, down from 45 percent in 2008.

The study was conducted in partnership with the National Aboriginal

Community Controlled Health Organisation, its affiliates, 34 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and Torres Shire Council.

The study was funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and published in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*.

More information: David P. Thomas et al. Do stress, life satisfaction, depression and alcohol use predict quitting among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers?, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* (2020). [DOI: 10.1111/1753-6405.12993](https://doi.org/10.1111/1753-6405.12993)

Provided by Menzies School of Health Research

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