

SmokeFree Oceania – Māori Successes and Strategies

Professor Chris Cunningham

Abstract

Māori were smokefree prior to 1820 and, post 2020, we could be there again. Māori have the dubious distinction of being amongst the highest smoking populations in the world today, the effects on individuals and their whānau, hapū and iwi are significant. As a significant modifiable risk factor contributing to inequalities in health, tobacco smoking deserves the attention it gets.

Prevention of uptake and cessation programmes, such as those provided for smokers by The Quit Group and other Aukati Kai Paipa providers, are key strategies. But structural levers are probably the most successful. Hone Harawira's utopia of a Smokefree Aotearoa as a 'by Māori for Māori' initiative holds promise. But can it be achieved?

One controversial alternative which deserves some attention is Snus. Technically Snus is smokefree – being a chewing tobacco alternative - and evidence suggests health improvements from transferring a smoking habit to a chewing one. But many have concerns that a less-harmful alternative may undermine existing efforts and make 'Quit' a more difficult achievement for Aotearoa. Is there a role for such approaches in a SmokeFree Oceania?

This presentation will summarise our successes and suggest strategies for the future.