

MEDIA RELEASE

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New service offers help to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

A NEW service has been established at the Toowoomba Hospital to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people struggling to quit smoking.

Community Health Pharmacist Johanna Bou-Samra conducts smoking cessation clinics three days a week.

“The clinics are based on the Sydney University Brain and Mind Institute Smokers Clinics,” Ms Bou-Samra said.

“Each client is assessed for nicotine dependence during an initial one-hour consultation.

“Treatment is then tailored to the patient’s dependency level.

“These treatments are based on scientific evidence and have been shown to give the best long-term results.

“We focus on ensuring that quitting smoking is as comfortable as possible.

“We do not set quit dates or ask the patients not to smoke. We keep tailoring the treatment until they completely lose interest in smoking.”

Since the clinics started at the beginning of the year, dozens of clients have taken part resulting in a number of former smokers including Toowoomba resident Denis Jackson.

After being a smoker for nearly 50 years, Denis now proudly credits himself as a “non-smoker” thanks to the help he received in the clinics.

He trialled a number of quit methods including patches and medication before settling on a nicotine spray to control his cravings and strong mindset to break the habit.

“Over the years I used to give up for six, eight or even 12 months at a time, but I would always go back to smoking,” Mr Jackson said.

“But now I’ve completely given up for good.”

Mr Jackson said it was a stint in the intensive care unit at the Toowoomba Hospital that finally convinced him he needed to quit smoking.

“When I used to smoke, every winter I would end up in hospital,” he said.

“But last year I nearly died; I was in ICU for 13 days.

“That was my wake-up call; that (experience) and the help from Joh are the things that made me stop smoking.”

It’s been over 12 months since Mr Jackson gave up cigarettes. He now is inspiring his friends and family to follow in his footpath.

“It’s made people realise that it’s never too late,” he said.

“If I can do it, that others can too.”

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Toowoomba who would like to access the smoking cessation clinics are encouraged to ask for a referral via their GP or medical centre.

For more information contact Community Health Pharmacist Johanna Bou-Samra on 4616 6918 or 4616 6831.

Caption:

Toowoomba resident Denis Jackson is proud to call himself a “non-smoker” after attending smoking cessation clinics held by Community Health pharmacist Joh Bou-Samra.

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