



# Makara patapa / quit smoking

Podcast transcript

## Introduction

The makara patapa program is a TAC initiative, as part of our holistic approach to health and wellbeing, supported by the Department of Health Tasmania.

## Episode 4: Stephen Picken

### Introduction:

Ya everyone. Nunami here, In 2022, I was asked to travel across Lutruwita and record our community stories of quitting smoking.

I heard so many great success stories of our people who managed to quit and got a good picture of why our people chose to quit, how they did it, and what supports they were able to access along the way.

This is the makara patapa podcast.

### Stephen:

Hi, I'm Stephen Picken from Hobart. I'm currently training to become an Aboriginal health worker.

I knew I always wanted to do something to help support my community and give back to them 'cause. I've received so much help over the years from the community. But I never thought I was able or smart enough to go to a TAFE or university or anything. It wasn't until Sara Maynard pushed me to do the training course, I took the three-month training course. It just really opened my eyes and I mean discover that helping my community and doing clinical work is what I really want to do.

I started smoking about 10 years ago when I was 18. I was working in hospitality. I was working 12-hour shifts without a break, pretty much. The people who have smoked got about multiple times a day, so I thought to myself, 'I'm going to start smoking so I can get more breaks in' and that was just the undoing of me.

I've been like a pretty big chain smoker for about the last 10 years. Smoking is something that I've always been around. It's been a big thing in my family growing up, so yeah, I had a lot of mates and friends that done it so I just found it quite easy. If I was on smoking tailor made, I'd smoke about 20 a day, but if I was on pouch tobacco it was probably double that.

I considered quitting for the last few years because I have an uncle who had to have a double lung transplant because of smoking. My brother had his lung collapse because of smoking.

So in the back of my mind, it's always been there and you need to quit for your health. But it wasn't something that it actually had sunk in until recently. I had the opportunity to be employed as elder support for an elders trip with our community, and I didn't want to be



## Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre

smoking around our elders or having my attention away from them 'cause I'm running off to hide around corner for the smoke.

So I took some patches and some gum from the doctor's here, and I tried it for the week. Now originally, I was going to do it for the week, but then by the end of the week I'd found it so easy. Not so easy, but it was quite easy to go the week without smoking. Then I thought, well I might as well keep it up because if I can quit for my elders, I can do it for the rest of the community because I didn't want to kind of health worker and preach to people to live a life and then go home and chain smoke a pack of cigarettes. So hypocritical.

When I originally spoke to the doctor about them, Doctor Tash had given me a lot of a lot of advice. Yes, and advised me what products were the best and how to use them. And then I just went about it my way.

Yes, I wore 24-hour patches and gum and I used those for about two months and then I just stopped using them and haven't really had any trouble since. Decided to start taking them off. During the night because I had given me pretty vivid dreams, not nightmares, but they were very vivid dreams that had me waking up in cold sweats and sort of terrified.

So about after a month I stopped using them at night, and then I'd put a fresh one on in the morning and I used to chew a piece of gum about every hour, and then I just stopped one day.

For the first couple of weeks, I actually avoided all my mates and any family members who smoked 'cause I didn't want to be around them in case it made me jump back in and relapse.

It was quite difficult because I would, whenever I ride my motorbike is sorta get off the bike and have a cigarette so it was trying to find something to replace the cigarette we've after getting off the bike so I bought a pack of lollipops and just sit in my motorbike bag. So every time I stop them, get off the motorbike, I'd have a few licks on a lollipop.

I tried to quit once before I lasted probably 5 hours, but it was pretty horrible and I caved in pretty easily. But this time around I think I was in the right frame of mind this time to actually kick the habit.

I've been smoke free for 120 days. My asthma isn't as bad as it used to be. Every couple days I'd be huffing away on an asthma pump, but I haven't had to use it in the last two months.

Yeah, that's been a huge difference, really just being able to breathe easily. I'm not as strapped for cash and I'm not borrowing money off people every few days to buy smokes when I'm out of cash.

So I've really noticed that I've actually finally been able to start a savings accounts to saving out, possibly for a house deposit or something.

Just try. Try your best. So even if you don't quit this time, it's something that will help you down the road. When you're ready. To quit.

### **Nunami Outro:**

Ya Everyone, Nunami again - thanks for listening to the makara patapa podcast. A podcast series by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Center with support from public Health Services Tasmania.