



THE HON WARREN SNOWDON MP
Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health
and Regional Services Delivery

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New National Coordinator to Tackle Indigenous Smoking

Minister for Indigenous Health Warren Snowdon today announced high profile leader Mr Tom Calma has been engaged as the inaugural National Coordinator for Tackling Indigenous Smoking.

Mr Calma was most recently the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner from mid-2004 until early 2010 and has been Chair of the Close the Gap Steering Committee for Indigenous Health Equality since its inception in March 2006.

“Tom Calma will bring a wealth of experience, excellent advocacy skills and a strong personal commitment to the role. He has been involved in Indigenous affairs at a local, community, state, national and international level and worked in the public sector for over 35 years,” Mr Snowdon said.

The role of the National Coordinator for Tackling Indigenous Smoking will be to:

- Lead and mentor the tackling smoking workforce being established under the Federal Government’s \$100 million COAG Tackling Smoking initiative to reduce the incidence of tobacco smoking in Indigenous communities
- Provide advice and insights which assist to shape policy and program directions in Indigenous tobacco control
- Play a key role in evaluating the Federal Government’s \$14.5 million *Indigenous Tobacco Control Initiative* to ensure successful pilot programs are translated into improved services on the ground
- Advocate the importance of, and best practice approaches to, reducing smoking in Indigenous families, communities and workplaces.

Mr Snowdon said the role was formed as part of the historic \$1.6 billion Council of Australian Government’s (COAG) agreement to Close The Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes National Partnership Agreement.

“The Commonwealth is investing \$100.6 million in the *tackling smoking* measure and the engagement of the national coordinator is one of the first milestones of the measure.

“Smoking is a major contributor to the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Tobacco smoking alone is responsible for 20 per cent of all deaths for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people,” Mr Snowdon said.

Mr Calma said the role that he will play as National Coordinator will build on and synergise with the work of the Close the Gap Campaign and member organisations.

“This includes working with the Aboriginal community controlled medical services to reach our people wherever they live and creating an environment where all parties working on the challenge of smoking cessation, work collegiately and strategically.

“I am honoured to be appointed to the National Coordinator position and I look forward to working with all parties to make a difference.

There are many challenges least of which will be working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and individuals to develop the strategies and interventions to tackle smoking addiction,” Mr Calma said.

Further background on Tom Calma:

Mr Calma is an Aboriginal elder from the Kungarakkan tribal group and a member of the Iwaidja tribal group whose traditional lands are south-west of Darwin and on the Coburg Peninsula in Northern Territory.

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