

PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA  
**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**ABORIGINAL SMOKING BREAKTHROUGH**

The Public Health of Australia (PHAA) has welcomed the Government's appointment of former Social Justice Commissioner Tom Calma as Australia's first National Coordinator for Tackling Indigenous Smoking.

PHAA President Professor Mike Daube, an expert on tobacco who is also President of the Australian Council on Smoking and Health, said, "This is a tremendously important development in dealing with Australia's biggest single challenge in reducing smoking".

"Smoking is declining in the rest of the population – but is a catastrophe for Aboriginal people. Upwards of 50% of Aboriginal people smoke, compared with around 16% of the overall population. Smoking causes no less than 20% of Aboriginal deaths. Nothing could do more to close the life expectancy gap than reducing smoking in Aboriginal people."

"Tom Calma is an outstanding choice for this vital role where funding has been allocated and cooperative action is needed. He is willing to speak his mind, will undoubtedly make things happen, and already has a strong track record in pressing for action on smoking."

"This appointment will be widely welcomed. It could be a real breakthrough for Indigenous health and the most important development yet in Closing the Gap."

**For further information/comment:  
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