

SHORT ONES

Tobacco stories
from Arnhem Land

Compiled by
Jan Robertson



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Front cover:

Main: Buckingham River, north-east Arnhem Land

Insets from top to bottom: preparing a traditional pipe; sharing a “short one”; the dried leaves of the *rorruwurr* plant are crushed and smoked; tobacco for chewing mixed with ash of white coolabah tree; a decision to quit.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the people of Arnhem Land communities who have shared their time and stories over the past four years with members of the Top End Tobacco Project Team. Thank you for your generosity.

WARNING TO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS:
This book may contain photographs of deceased persons.

Contents

Foreword by Tom Calma.....	7
List of story tellers.....	8
Background.....	9
Acknowledgements.....	10
Word Meanings.....	11

Foreword

My experience with tobacco started nearly 50 years ago when I was about 10 years old. I used to humbug my Wetji (grandmother) to let me roll her smokes – it was fun and we never thought that we were preparing me to be a smoker.

When I was a teenager I humbugged Wetji to let me light the smoke I rolled for her. None of us knew how bad smoking was for our health or how much money we wasted on buying tobacco and smokes.

Thirty years ago I gave up smoking and I am so happy I did.

Today we know how bad smoking is for our health and the health of everybody who is around us when we are smoking – this is called passive smoking. We also know that if you smoke just 25 cigarettes a day you will spend about \$6,000 a year – money that is wasted because \$6,000 goes a long way to buying good food, taking the family on a holiday, buying a car, buying a boat or outboard or anything you are missing out on now.

It is important that we understand that one in five of our people die each year from a smoking related disease like heart attack, emphysema, lung, throat and many other cancers and smoking also affects our eyes, ear, teeth and gums.

All smokers know how hard it is to give up or cut back but we must also know that we can and we must give up smoking if we want to have a long life to see our kids and grand kids grow up.

The stories told by our mob in “SHORT ONES” are so important because they tell us that we can give up if we want to – but they also tell us it is not always easy. They tell us why it is important to give up and how they have tried and sometimes failed and sometimes succeeded and how good it feels when we do give up smoking. Some stories are very sad but they are stories that we all know and have experienced.

If you don't smoke – don't – and if you do smoke think about giving up and talk to your health worker, doctor or ring Quitline on 13 78 48 for help to give up.

Let's all work together to help each other to kick the habit.



Dr Tom Calma
National Coordinator, Tackling Indigenous Smoking

List of Story Tellers

Stephanie Yirkaniwuy DHAMARRANDJI

Cherry DANIELS

Maureen THOMPSON

Isobel DANIELS

Rose PONTO

Colin [family name withheld by request]

Nathan YUNUPINGU

Geoffrey DHAMARRANDJI

Shaun NAMARNYILK

Bundy NAMARNYILK

Helen GUYULA

Dwayne ROGERS

Wally WILFRED

David YANGARRINY

Kamahl MURRUNGUN

Winston FOSTER

Alison NILCO

Ethan NAUBULWAD

Patrick NAGURRGURRBA & Adrian GARNARRADJ

Background

I was recently reminded by a *Yolngu* colleague that I was “*djungayi* for *narali*” which to the best of my knowledge translates to ‘manager’ or ‘lawyer’ for tobacco. He was speaking of responsibilities acquired through my adoption by Stephanie Yirkaniwuy Dhamarrandji, a *dhuwa* woman. This also fits well with my position over the last four years as Project Leader on the Top End Tobacco Project. This is a five year project working with three remote Aboriginal communities in Arnhem Land to identify appropriate strategies to reduce the very high prevalence of tobacco use.

In the very early days of the project, Local Indigenous Health Workers remarked on the way we demonstrated that we would “*sit down and listen first*” because this would allow for “*ideas coming out of the people*” rather than “*telling them what they should do*”. This process has enabled us to work together, acknowledging cultural beliefs and ceremonial responsibilities relating to tobacco. It has helped us to understand historical aspects of tobacco use including the use of bush tobacco or tobacco introduced by missionaries, pastoralists or Macassan traders.

These stories have been given to us in order to share them with other Indigenous Australians, to encourage them to break free from tobacco.



Yapas: Stephanie Yirkaniwuy Dhamarrandji & Jan Robertson

Acknowledgements

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Stephanie Yirkaniwuy Dhamarrandji and Wanamulla Gondarra: thanks for making our first steps in your country the right ones.

Thank you also to Top End Tobacco Project team: Alan Clough for conceiving and designing the project based on many years experience in these communities, and to Ray Genn for your great spirit on our travels (and for helping to collect the stories and photos).

Jan Robertson
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Word Meanings

<i>Yolŋu</i>	Aboriginal person
<i>djun gayi</i>	Manager, lawyer
<i>dhuwa</i>	Moiety name, the complimentary opposite is Yirritja
<i>yapa</i>	Sister
<i>ŋarali</i>	Tobacco
<i>pituri</i>	A mix for of dried, powdered leaves of the nicotine plant and ash prepared for chewing
<i>yuwalk</i>	True
<i>manymak</i>	Good
<i>manikay</i>	Ritual song or ritual singing
<i>waku</i>	Child
<i>luŋiny</i>	Pipe for smoking
<i>amarda</i>	Cannabis
<i>larawa</i>	Pipe for smoking
<i>gunbang</i>	Alcohol
<i>bakki</i>	Tobacco



STEPHANIE YIRKANIWUY DHAMARRANDJI

(Stephanie is a Senior Health Worker)

When I was working at the clinic I used to smoke. Every day. *Nyarali'* was my breakfast. At tea time I used to sit and smoke. One day I was sitting smoking and somebody came and said to me "Why don't you tell the story about the cigarette to people?" And I say: How can I tell other people the story about smoking when I am a smoker myself? I look at myself and thought: if I tell the story I got to give up smoking first and then I can tell the story.

A lot of people came and reminded us (of smoking). Just looking at people – they were smoking, and something inside, that feeling when we were asking for cigarette, that feeling, saying "Go back. Start smoking." But something was saying slowly, just go away from the other people who smoke, just sit by ourselves.

Now I feel different, I feel happy. My body just feel good, my lungs feel good, like a new person. I feel too much to go back into that same way where I was tired, sleepy. That thing, that makes me wanting, that's all gone, finished. No more cigarette.

October 2007



CHERRY DANIELS

Chewing tobacco is present in Minyerri and Jilkminggan. In the 1950's – didn't have sticks – block tobacco; black stick curly tobacco and fine cut tobacco from store – rations for pay on stations. Chewing started in 1900's. The idea did not come from central Australia – men and women working on pastoral lands saw white people chewing tobacco.

I use the ash from the coolibah tree, the same species as in NSW. The ash makes the tobacco last longer. It stops it getting too soft and helps keep the taste. The first time I chewed tobacco I was ten years old. I was with a friend and stole a stick from mother who was out fishing. I got dizzy. We didn't try again until thirteen. In late '58-'59 my friend started smoking. I didn't. I had seen smokers coughing, some coughing up blood. My father used to chew, others smoked tobacco in a pipe, a *larawa*. When block tobacco was no longer available (in 1966) only Havelock fine cut was available, very strong, stronger than all other tobaccos even White Ox. In 1970's a wide variety of tobacco became available in remote communities: Erinmore, Log Cabin, Capstan. People used to smoke menthols, Alpine, from '60's to the '90's.

I didn't chew much when I had children and was working at the school. I could go without if I ran out. Then my husband was smoking heavily. I started chewing more to keep up with my share of tobacco. In the early 1920's – 1950's men didn't start smoking until they were 20 or 30. They were really strong men. Then women started smoking a lot. In '60's that changed – people started smoking in their teens and got sick later. No young women in Ngukurr chew tobacco or those in their 30's to 40's. In Lajamanu and Borroloola old and younger women chew. In Ngukurr there are ten women chewing, mostly old but one in her 40's and a 15 year old who lived in Lake Nash and learnt to chew *pituri* there. In 1992, at Intjartnama, I tried *pituri* – made me dizzy – very strong.

I don't want to go to my grave chewing.

July 2008



MAUREEN THOMPSON

When I was young, the older women at Urapunga got me to prepare tobacco for chewing. I already had two kids when I started chewing. I worked with my husband on stations – he got me to make smokes (rollies) for him and encouraged me to smoke too.

I chew tobacco all day - never ending. I smoke one cigarette in the morning and one at night. I buy tobacco in the tin. I get smokes sometimes off my family. Sometimes I break up smokes and chew them a small bit at a time. I mix my tobacco with the ash of coolibah tree (cheeky one) bark. There is a tree out near Yellow Water.

I chewed *pituri* when I lived in Alice. I married a tracker from Alice. The *pituri* was collected when it was green. Then it was dried in the sun. I washed out my mouth before I ate and drank.

I couldn't chew that gum (nicotine replacement therapy) because I lost my dentures. I could go without smoking but not chewing.

There is medicine. It's medicine for flu from the white gum tree – it can cure cancer. I don't worry about tobacco because bush medicine can make me well. This (bush medicine) was my dream God has given me. But God told me to give up tobacco too.

July 2008



ISOBEL DANIELS

I was born in Darwin Hospital and lived with my foster parents. My foster mum was an old lady from Tiwi. She was married to my father's younger brother. They raised me up from a baby. They are all dead and gone. I miss them a lot. Mum used to take me to her family in Tiwi for school holidays. She used to keep telling me and reminding me where my family were. Mum and Dad took care of me and encouraged me to come to my family in Ngukurr. I went to Ludmilla School in Darwin. I think I was 13. It was a long story and leaving a family in Darwin and losing loved ones was hard. Then in 1974 I left Darwin just before Cyclone Tracey came. I was really lucky in that time. My foster mum and dad came to Ngukurr to visit later and they were recognized as family here, part of the community.

I started smoking when I was 17. I had my eldest girl Tammy when I was 20 and kept on smoking. Then when I was 29 or 30 the clinics were doing check- ups for everybody. They wanted us to have TB tests. When they did that test they found out I had rheumatic heart. They started telling me about "living for my heart" and stop smoking. I was still smoking when they were making arrangements for me to go to Adelaide for an operation on my heart.

When I left Ngukurr to go to Adelaide I bought one packet of smokes, I was going to take one out for a drag. But I flicked back straight away to what I'd been told about stopping. I put it back in the pack and left it in my bag. I gave it to Tammy's dad who met me in Katherine to give me some support. I travelled by myself to Darwin on the bus then flew to Adelaide. When the doctor in Adelaide was talking to me about the operation I was real scared and teary. I remember the doctor looking in my eyes when he was telling me the operation was a big risk (it took eight hours), I was afraid to have the operation but I had my three daughters to think of. I was thinking of them a lot. I really wanted to be with them. My girls were important. More important than the fear. I never smoked since then – 14 years I think. I always talk to most of my sister's kids, brother's kids, cousins. I say you shouldn't be smoking but you make your own decisions . These are grown kids.. It's very bad to sit by little kids and smoke. I quit myself – no help. No-one around here could believe it. I used to be a number one smoker. A couple of people wanted to know how I could quit but it was just me.

February 2010



ROSE PONTO

I started smoking when I was 14, just smoke, smoke, smoke. When I saw my family have smoke I kept asking them for a shot. I was crazy really on smoking. When I was about 26 I tried to give up. It sorta made my brain funny. I felt drowsy and was sleeping all day. I used to leave work and go out for a smoke every half hour or so. I would go out to the shelter and smoke away from the kids. My boss used to say "Where are you going? You're not going out for a cigarette, are you?" I used to lie and say I was doing something else. I used to get with my husband and when we were sharing a smoke, I wanted most of it. I got angry if I only got a short one.

I had pneumonia and a slight heart attack in Katherine. I flew from there to Darwin then straight to ICU. I was in a coma. When I woke up I seen all these people all around in blue gowns. I asked them where I am. The doctor was warning me to stop. He said "that smoking is going to kill you in the future. You can't last long if you keep smoking," I started smoking heavier. When I was smoking my heart used to go BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! It would go really fast. I'd get frightened and start breathing fast and panicking. My son used to ask "When you going to give up?" I'd say "Nah, I don't know when, maybe when I'm in my forties and fifties." I was short of breath to go for a short walk. I would get chest pain, it was very scary.

Last year I had another heart attack. They gave me the (nicotine) patches in ICU. The doctor who was looking after me said "Rose, you have to give up smoking because in the long run you won't be around, maybe." I went down from the ward for a walk with the patch on. I saw some family and asked them for a cigarette. I pulled my patch off and smoked it. I was trying to give up but it was too hard to stop. I tried that 16 hour patch. I got it from Wurli – tried it a few times. Then I tried another patch – a stronger 24 hour one and that didn't work. I thought how am I going to give up? I just wanted to give up. I knew smoking affects your brain as well as your heart. I quit. It was a big struggle for me. I drank lots and lots of water. I used prayer. I cried out to the Lord and asked Him for strength. When I first stopped I felt trembly, slow, vomiting and coughing. I felt really good when I told my son and my family I had quit. I used to buy cartons and cartons of smokes. I have nothing like that panicking now. I feel great but I don't like people smoking around me because their smoke isn't good for me.

February 2010



COLIN [family name withheld by request]

My smoking story is: I smoke. When there's nothing interesting to do I just sit back and relax and smoke. It gives me a buzz too. It's good when I leave it for five or six days and then when I smoke I feel like.... good.

When I have a packet I smoke roughly twelve a day. I share my smokes, of course. It can be hard to buy cigarettes sometimes. People buy a carton and sell \$1 a smoke. Some people don't want to share and save their smokes until pay week. On the weekend everyone is broke.

I started smoking when I was roughly ten years. We used to pinch smokes and go around the corner to smoke. In 1998 or '99 I stopped smoking for seven years, I just quit naturally. I started smoking again when I was drinking. I myself I can quit smoking today if I want to – without patches and gum. I was thinking I wanted to still be around to see my grandchildren. I'm waiting for my first grandchild. My daughter is in Katherine Hospital now. When I see my granddaughter or grandson I will probably quit for good so I can see the next one.

February 2010



NATHAN YUNUPINGU

My mind tells me, like if I wanna stop smoking I think first before I'm going to look for *ɲarali'*.

The more you think about *ɲarali'* the more you wanna look for *ɲarali'*. You wanna have a drag of that cigarette. You want to have the taste.

But if you really wanna quit you gotta stick to your plan, and follow your plan. Just stop thinking about *ɲarali'*, just walk away and think about another thing. So that way you won't be able to get back to that thinking, to get that *ɲarali'*.

'Cos *ɲarali'*, when the first taste you have, it will make you look for more and more *ɲarali'*.

March 2010



GEOFFREY DHAMARRANDJI

I just want to explain about how I give up from *narali*. I give up because back in 1990's, 1992, I think, at that time a packet of cigarette was only \$5. Cheap you know, cheaper, very cheap and that's why with \$10 I bought two packets. But with that two packets it took me one day. One day, and say in the afternoon I would get another one so it would look like three packets you know. It's too much to me. I know it's too much, because I thought with that three packets that was only there for enjoying you know. Enjoying, so we can share, just for fun you know. But that's not really for fun. The full story is just coming in, the doctors, nurses and some other staff came and explained "the *narali* is killing you." And then one day the doctor came from Nhulunbuy, they came to Galiwin'ku and he asked me, you know, "how much packets do you smoke?" I didn't hide it or anything but I just tell it straight to the doctor: 3 packets a day, I know that's too much. "So, alright, I'll tell you a straight story and then up to you to decide." And then he advised me, "next year you'll be finished." Next year? "Yes, next year." And it's a big question mark you know to me. What the best way. I was thinking very hard you know, very, very hard. The most important message that came to me is, in that story about *narali* the first priority is my wife and my kid, my grandson, my granddaughter and then I gave up, straight away. No magic, no anything, no tablet, anything I just give up. And I am the one who is the heaviest smoker in Galiwin'ku, *yuwalk*. Three packets a day is too much and doctor told me this, that too much. Then after that, because it's very serious you know and that's why my mind, my eye, my ear, my head they are working together you know. And the time the doctor asked me, "Next year you will be finished, next year." I know and I said to him, the first priority I was taking very seriously because of my wife and my children and my grandson, granddaughter, all those family and that was very serious you know. And I just give up, all those things are not going to be healthy you know. I just simple, simple just give up. No magic, no anything you know. No tablet or anything. Sometimes I heard they gave tablets and the other stuff to stop them, but I didn't. I just give up, simple as that. And from there it took me nearly, just about 18 or 19 years and never a smoke.

I feel *manymak*. I'm like a teenage. Like teenage, I can walk you know, I can play, no problem.

March 2010



SHAUN NAMARNYILK

I'm going to go on a journey with my dad and my grandfather to walk to keep away from smoke. The community smoke, like, around the shop here. I go bush with my dad and my grandfather just to walk maybe ten days. Then I'll do that walk in my country area, me and my dad maybe more than ten days we'll walk, then I'll come back. This is just to quit, quit smoke, just give up.

Being out bush will help me get strong to quit. Being out bush you drink water, eat fish, everything. Things like chasing buffalo. When you go bush... listen to the birds... smell everything... is just fresh. And when you come back here, everything smells like smoke.

I want to take my family away from the community, my mother and my sister. Go bush to my country area just keep away, no smoke. When I go home tonight and tell my family: I just quit smoking, let me go bush. I want to take my mother back to my mother's country, it's a good place too. I've been there twice there, my grandfather too. Last year I was planning to go bush. I tell my boss here: One day I want to go there, it's my journey."

May 2010



BUNDY NAMARNYILK

If you going bush for a couple of weeks, months and you come back here and you are a drinker, that puts a change in there. If someone sitting there smoking and you can smell it, suddenly it's the end. In maybe, after a couple of days, then the man can't say anything "Can I have a drag please?" It's hard – if there's alcohol there and you are drinking and sit there, when you feel funny in your throat, you have to smoke. Like when people spew they need a cigarette to get rid of the taste.

You can be bush for maybe one year but when you come back, if you have the alcohol, if you a drinker and go to the pub, or get grog and go to the house or sitting in the grass with a few fellas trying to keep up and sitting there smelling the smoke, suddenly you feel funny in your throat or your mouth and you go "Can I have one drag please?" It's hard. Some of them people like me are sitting there next door to another fella, you can't say no plus my body or my feeling, I go: I'll grab one. But sometimes some people are non-smokers and they drink and it's all right.

May 2010



HELEN GUYULA

(Helen is a Health Worker and Community Educator. She is telling a story about a relative.)

She got really sick with pneumonia, no good lung, chest no good, wheezes, and the doctors wanted to put her into hospital. But she had spent months in hospital last year “I am always in hospital, missing people.” That’s why she found the message about stopping smoking a strong one, she didn’t want to go back to hospital, being away and worried for family. She heard the story that Helen had passed on to a family member “If you leave the *narali*, you can feel good.” She said to me “Tell them (the doctors) I don’t want to go back.” I told the doctors: don’t force her to go. I can give her education and pictures with the tobacco story board. And help her take her medications and give her bush medicine, from stringy bark eucalyptus, to help her breathe.

Narali’ manikay is singing the cigarettes into your heart, keeping tobacco in the heart. *narali’* is *waku*, your child. This is like, make you homesick if you give up. Her real husband is passed on. She called *narali’* and the pipe “my husband” talking “I can keep it, like my son, my daughter.” She used to smoke the *lunjiny* then when she ran out on the out-station, she’d go running to get people to send her smoke on the boat or plane. She’d send her niece to Galiwin’ku to get carton of smokes and Log Cabin for the *lunjiny*. She’d hide Log Cabin in a bottle so when people ran out she wouldn’t have to share it. She could go to sleep thinking and dreaming, happy that she still has got some *narali’*, not worried. When doing the *manikay* its like smoking in reality, makes them feel good. Seeing people do that makes me feel homesick (for tobacco). I saw one lady, she had run out of cigarettes. She was sitting down crying for *narali’*. She passed her message on to me – it made me feel sad for her.

Then some days later my aunt she just mentioned “I stopped smoking.” I cried. She told me “I left my husband.” You can see a difference now, looks like a new *manymak* person, changing so, breathing all right, feeling good. The rubbish is going out from the lungs.

May 2011



DAVID YANGARRINY

I first learnt to smoke when I was 20 years old. I smelt the smoke from people I worked with. Sitting next to two work friends I asked them: what does that smoke taste like, it smells good! They told me "Smoke would open up my mind and eyes." So I tried it. "It's the best first thing in the morning." they told me. Once I tried it, I smoked more and more. I became an avid smoker, smoking all the time. I didn't go anywhere without smoke. My mother smoked a pipe, sometimes I took smoke from my mother without her noticing because I was starving for smoke.

On public holidays when the shops were shut, I had prepared myself with lots of packets of smoke. This was for people to share when they starved for *ɲarali'*. I would give away packets on these days. But I would always leave enough for me, I would never run out. 11 years ago I woke up feeling very sick in my chest, big infection. I was coughing and couldn't breathe very well. This sickness made me think about what the smoke was doing to me. *ɲarali'* was what made me sick. For five days I didn't smoke *ɲarali'*, I was sick for all that time, very weak and could not do much at all. People tried to smoke around me at the time, I told them to go away and smoke somewhere else. I realised that smoking was what made me sick. I made the choice not to smoke again.

For two months on the top shelf of the cupboard I had packets of smoke as a souvenir. I wanted to see if the packets would talk to me. Asking me to smoke, it never did. My brother ended up humbugging me for them and he still smokes. The cigarettes didn't talk to me even when I went for a drink. The smoke used to whisper in my ears, but I never listened to them again. That was 11 years ago.

My taste came back, no smoke, my mind came clearer, my eyes opened up. I am healthy, strong with no infection, no chronic disease, and no diabetes. I eat healthy and drink lots of water. In my home we have a rule, to keep the air clean, people smoke outside, never inside. I see people cry and dance for *ɲarali'*, people are sick from smoke.

I starve no longer for *ɲarali'*, I am free from the whispers.

May 2011



DWAYNE ROGERS

I'm 26 now, 26 years old. Heaps of people smoke in town here. The younger generation heaps of smoke in the school and stuff. The kids in the community, you know they do what they see and stuff they see: a lot of smokers smoking everywhere, so they think it's cool and that, so they start smoking too. And me, I started smoking in school when I was about 13 yrs old. I had my first, not cigarette, but I had my first *amarda* when I was 13 – that's gunja. I started mixing it up with tobacco when I was at school, college. We used to smoke in the shower late at night when everyone was asleep. I started smoking gunja and then I got into cigarette, you know? Because I'd smoke gunja, then a cigarette would give you a kick after having the smoke of gunja, it would make you freak out a lot. So I started smoking cigarette then. I didn't like it but somehow I ended up smoking. When I was growing up I never thought I'd smoke, I thought I'd never drink. But then because all my family were smoking, my dad, my brother, sisters and my friends, just about all of my friends.

I'm the captain of the football team. Smoking affects my running, I want to give up. To become the best you have to live healthy, healthy lifestyle and quit smoking. Quit doing that stuff you been doing, stuff that's going to bring you down in the end. Smoking has affected my football skill. Everything that I used to do I can't do now without having, like getting short of breath, you know? I think I might give up, give up because I don't want to be smoking all my life you know. I mean I've seen what smoke can do on TV. I've seen it first-hand with families here. Died of heart attack and lung cancer you know and all the people in this community are very sick right now but they don't know it. Smoking is killing us every day, every day every puff is doing the damage. I wanna give up smoking but there's nothing else to do in the community so I just sit down and have a smoke and think about what's going to happen today or tomorrow. Personally I don't like smoking but I've got the habit of smoking. Even though I don't like it and I know it's killing me.

In the community it's pretty easy to give up but we're just getting lazy I think. If we'd go out bush, stay out bush without any cigarettes, without any junks, without nothing, I think we'd live a healthy lifestyle in the community. Most of the people in Ngukurr smokes. Even the kids today, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen year old, they smoking as we speak. I'd say to kids that aren't smoking: don't smoke. Don't ever think about start smoking because smoking will smash your life up. You will never be the best you can be.

June 2011



WALLY WILFRED

Now like when we was talking yesterday about smoke, we bin try a lot of things, try to stop us from smoking but didn't work, But we still keep on smoking. Like we tried that stuff when you come, we tried chewing gum, and tried that patch but nothing. It didn't take away that starving. Some people tried for a couple of weeks and months. But still doesn't work. Mostly once you bin start smoking you won't leave that habit of smoking. You gonna keep going and going. Even if you sick, maybe you still got to smoke. Maybe it's sorta like good medicine for people who know how to smoke (laughs). You never going to stop. Like maybe you eat good, right good food. You never can stop eating that. Same goes to that smoke. That taste of the smoke, he never fade away. That's why some of them really, really great smoker. I am one of them, I really smoke a heavy smoke, Log Cabin, and I smoke 24 hours. I wake up in the night, I still smoke. No matter where I go I still gotta have my smoke.

I don't want to change. Some of them smoke, I feel, light, some of them heavy, heavy smoker, like me. Some of the guys, some of the light smokers they leave on the heavy smoke. Cigarette and rollies are for light smoker and they stay on that. Same for heavy smokers like us mob, stay on the heavy smoke. The other problem I bin smoking for long time and I never stopped smoking. We didn't have smoke before 'cos this white European mob 'em make smoke, bring it into the Territory and spread everywhere. 'Cos the olden days they never smoke and they didn't know about that smoke in the first place. They bin healthy, and long wind for run, chasing buffalo, cattle, emus, kangaroos They never beat them. They were fit and healthy on that days. But now this poison thing comes and destroy all the young people, you know. I don't know why they make this and bring it everywhere, smoke. They only make that smoke for money 'cos they run out of money. In Ngukurr some of them heavy smokers, some of them not really, like I said a while ago. Yeah true, smoke is killing us.

June 2011



KAMAH MURRUNGUN

I am 24 years old and haven't smoked since I was 20 years old. I smoked for two or three years and then decided that smoke was not for me. I woke up one day and stopped smoking. It was a little hard at first but easy for me.

The reason for me not to smoke is because of all the bad things it does to my body. I play AFL and live a healthy life, no smoke.

I do feel bad for my family because they smoke, I think they might end up in hospital before me. It will hurt my feelings to see them sick and maybe die.

I think there are too many people smoking in the community, people need to speak to friends about how they are hurting themselves and tell each other that it's bad to smoke.

May 2011



WINSTON FOSTER

I started to smoke in 1993 that means I have been smoking for around 18 years. When I started it was when I was about 13 years old. I smoked my first smoke with friends at school. The friends that taught me how to smoke were a little bit older than I was, maybe 15 years old.

I think I became addicted to smoke straight away. I used to steal smoke from my mother, sticks and rolie tobacco. Now because I have smoked for so long I find it very difficult to sleep if I don't have a smoke. In the mornings I smoke as soon as I wake up to start the day.

I have tried to stop smoke, I can stop smoking for two days and on the third night it gets too hard and I really need a smoke. There has been another time where I stopped smoking for six weeks. I chewed on PK gum, minties, drank loads of water and ate a lot of food. Why I started after six weeks of no smoke, was because I went to band practice and the smell of it was too tempting. So I smoked again.

I smoke whatever smoke I can find, sometimes I'm that desperate I pick butts off the ground to smoke. I usually smoke two packets of Winfield and a tin of Log Cabin a week.

I really want to stop. I have to look into the future, I have kids and a family to think about. I want to be healthy for them and not get sick with lung cancer or any other bad sickness that will kill me. The ads on TV make me think a lot about stopping, especially the one about the dad and his family.

June 2011



ALISON NILCO

I quit smoking when I was pregnant. I have five children, the oldest is 18. It wasn't hard to quit when I was pregnant because I was concerned about the baby inside. It would have been sick when it was born if I kept smoking.

Young girls, 13, 15, smoke. They think it's fun. They smoke when they are pregnant. They know they are not supposed to. There are plenty of messages around the community, signs, TV ads.

I started smoking again after each time I was pregnant because I was sitting there smelling other people's smoke. I might talk to a Tobacco Worker about quitting.

August 2011



ETHAN NABULWAD

I don't smoke much. Maybe a packet, 25 a day. For each one I smoke I give one away. Everybody likes smoking. I started smoking when I was 14. I was at the out-station. Us kids were just running around in the bush. I started on rollies – Log Cabin. That was all that was delivered to Mamadiwerri then, no Winfields. Then I came back to town here and kept smoking with my friends, my family.

I play in the footy team. It's going good. I go training every Friday in season. I like football, hunting, fishing. When I play football I don't smoke cigarettes that day. After the game I go home and have a rest. Then I have a smoke.

Maybe I will go bush to stay away, away from family smoking. Maybe for a long time, maybe for months. Then I can be strong when I come back to town and I can say: I don't smoke any more, I give up.

August 2011



PATRICK NAGURRGURRBA AND ADRIAN GARNARRADJ

They (the old people) used to walk across this flood plain here. Some people used to ride the horse, used to make some sort of wagon, horse with trailer in the back. Go get *bakki*, get flour for damper, sugar and all that. Go a lot further to just a boat ramp when they run out of things. They have to have one or two days walk to get more things. Others swim across. Maybe camp there for a few days.

They smash the tobacco, you know, that tobacco they used, chewing it like them cowboys. Take it to the rock where you have a hole there, smash it and make more fine or something. Put it in a pipe – the *larawa*. Like Indians or whatever (laughter). I used the pipe because it's stronger. It makes you cough. Sometimes I smoke *larawa* like to just save the tobacco, not to run out of tobacco. When they run out of tobacco they scrape out the pipe, especially out-station mob.

That's the reason, that's why we smoke so much in Gunbalanya, we got a club here. So a lot of people like to walk to the club and drink *gunbang* and sometimes smoke. Drinking and smoke at the same time so get yourself drunk. The *bakki* makes you more drunk if you have it with *gunbang*. Sitting round telling stories, laugh all that, smoking, telling hunting story or whatever, feel happy or something. Inside the club smoking is all right but outside, walking home, *bakki* makes trouble. People ask for smoke, "Can I have one or couple of smoke?" You say: buy smoke instead of buying beer! People arguing. It causes trouble, that one.

August 2011

Notes:



SHORT ONES

Tobacco stories from Arnhem Land