



Working for Mental Health

A stylized graphic of smoke or steam, composed of several overlapping, curved, light-colored shapes that rise from the bottom and drift to the right, positioned behind the main text.

breathe easy
...lifting the burden of smoking

Mental Health Coordinating Council

Carla Cowles - Project Officer

The *breathe easy* Project

- 18 month project 2008-2009
- A partnership between The Cancer Council NSW (CCNSW) and the Mental Health Coordinating Council (MHCC)
- Project that is part of CCNSW's *Tackling Tobacco*



Why?

- ↑ rate of smoking in people with a mental health problem - 32% compared to 20% in Aust;*
- A smoking culture within the mental health sector;
- Smoking creates financial, social and health burdens;
- To offer people with a mental health problem the same opportunities to quit smoking.

Project Aim:

*To reduce smoke-related harm in people
with a mental health problem*

Goals:

- To create a better awareness of the need to address smoking;
- To enhance the capacity of services to address smoking;
- To reduce the rate of smoking.

First Step: Baseline Data

- Survey sent to MHCC members investigating current smoking:
 - Attitudes - Policies - Practices
- 19% response rate
- Survey will be repeated at the end of the project in July 2009

Profile of Organisations

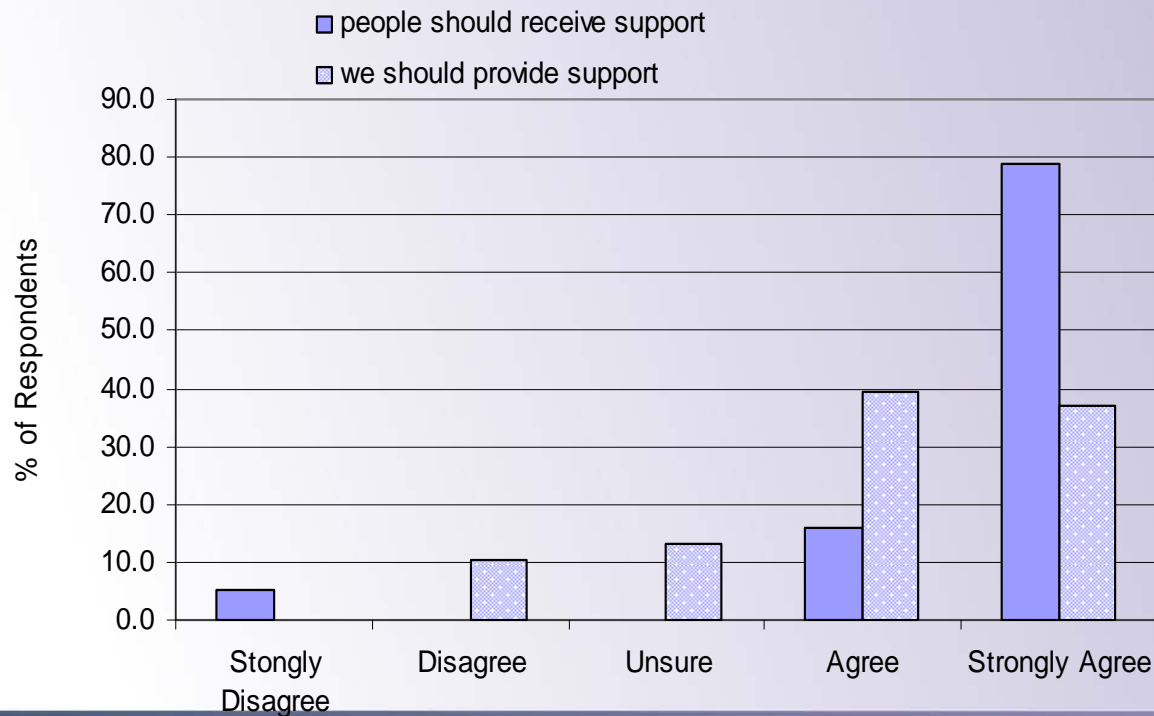
- Centre-based support, work, education and leisure
- Sydney region
- 1 to 50 FTE staff
- Most said that 21%-40% of staff were smokers

Attitudes to Smoking

- Generally positive and supportive
 - Awareness that smoking contributes to disadvantage
- Many were unsure → knowledge and lack of clear information available
- Perception that consumers do not want to quit smoking

Attitudes to Smoking

Supporting people to quit smoking



- Strong agreement that people should receive support

- Less agreement that it should be part of support given by organisations

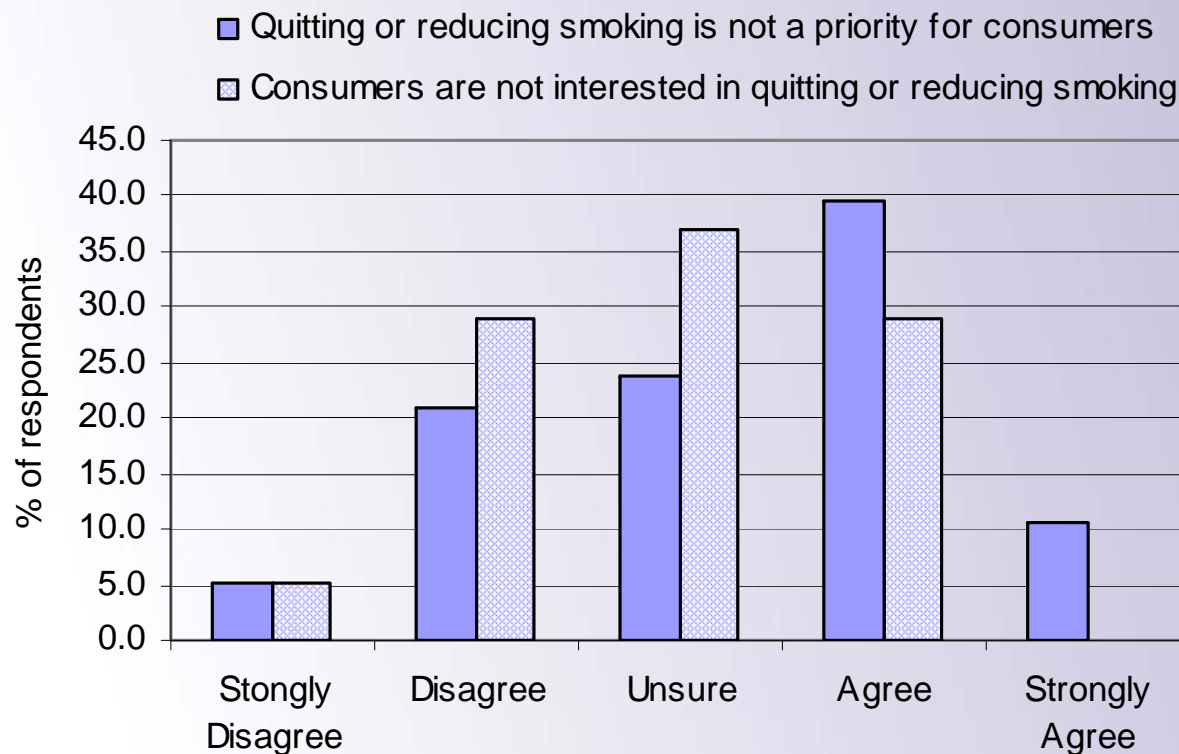
Attitudes to Smoking

“Quitting smoking will cause consumers to have a relapse in their mental illness”

- Over 50% agreed
- Over a third were still unsure

Attitudes to Smoking

Staff perception of consumer interest in addressing smoking

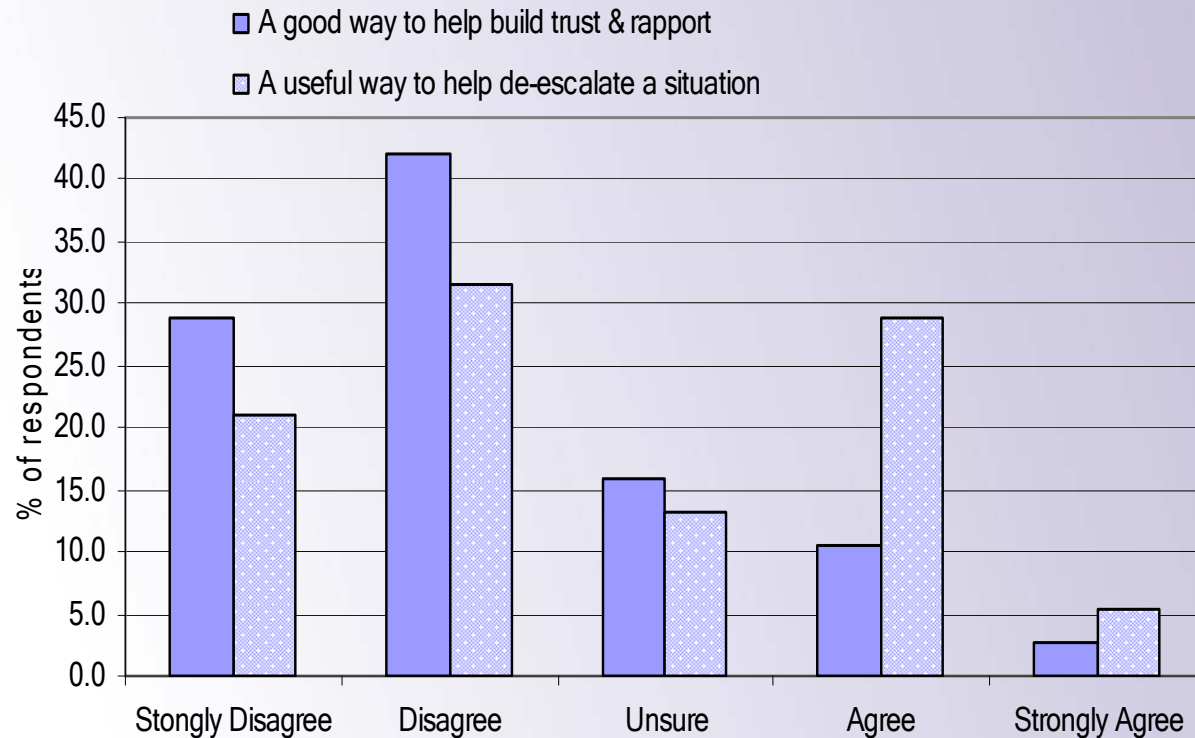


- Contrary to evidence that people with a mental health problem *want to* address smoking, staff do not think they do or they are unsure

- Study with Neami shows over 50% want to quit**

Attitudes to Smoking

Staff smoking with consumers



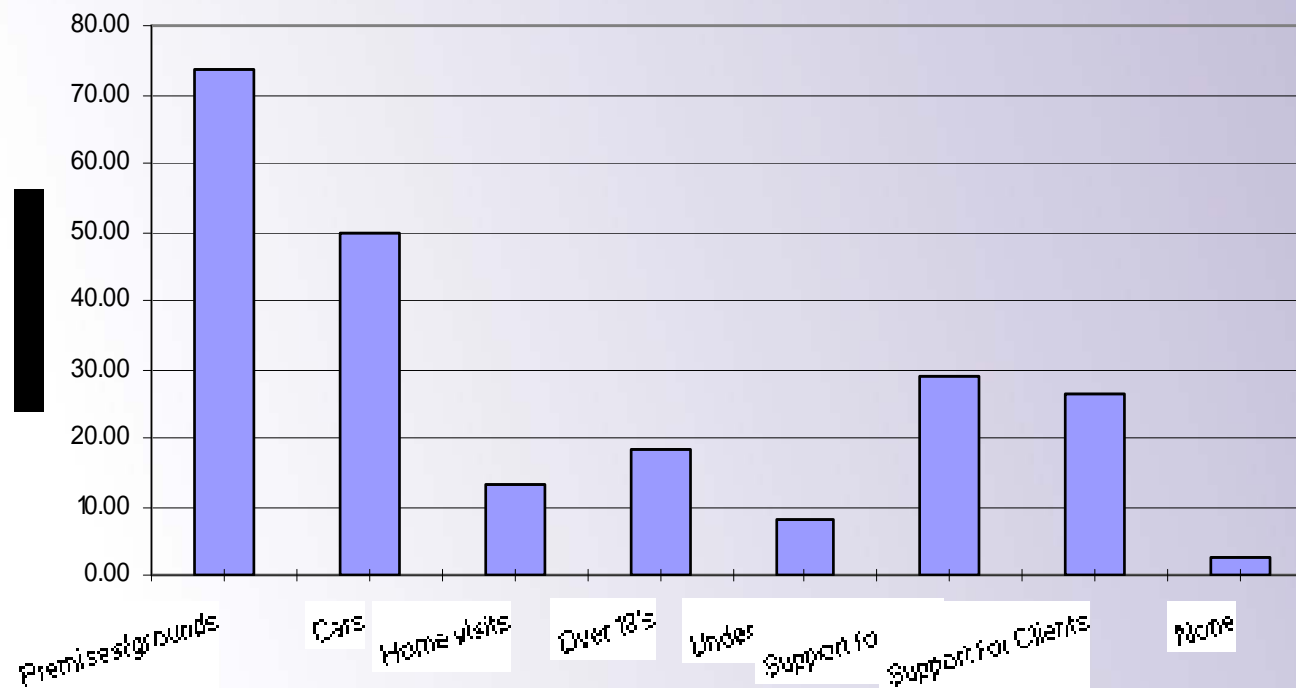
Contrary to anecdotal and research evidence most respondents did not agree that smoking with consumers is good practice

Organisations' Policies

- 76.3% have a policy on smoking - some were unsure or did not have one
- Most staff and consumers observe the smoking policies
- 50% do not have guidelines to assist consumers to quit smoking, but 34.2% do

Organisations' Policies

What does the policy include?



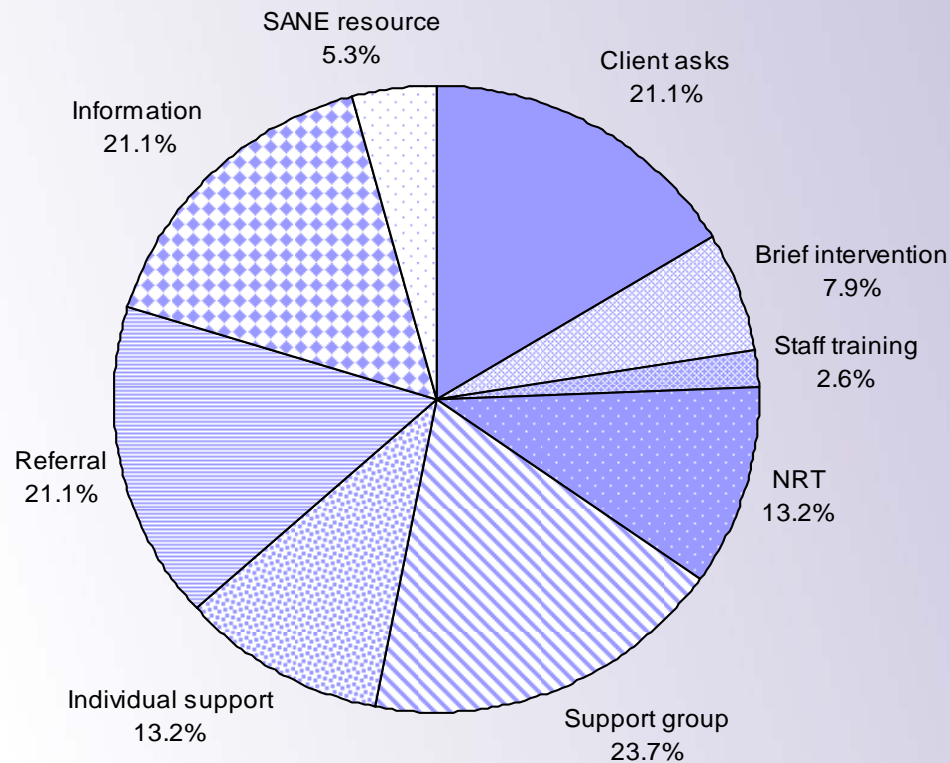
Most policies include basic legislation requirements but fewer policies included other issues around smoking.

Organisations' Practice

- Some inconsistencies in practices:
 - some org's refer some consumers to external support (e.g. Quitline);
 - some org's offered some consumers info;
 - some respondents unsure if consumers are referred or offered support to quit.
- 58.3% do not record smoking status of consumers - 4 respondents said they always record.

Organisations' Practice

Type of support provided



- Despite most not providing formal support many run support groups, refer, provide info or don't do anything until the consumers brings up smoking.

- One respondent mentioned staff training

Doing More About Smoking

- Almost 75% want to do more to address smoking
- The most useful strategies to do this:
 - free or subsidised NRT
 - staff training
 - Information, resources and assistance with policies
- Over 40% were 'Most Interested' to participate as a demonstration site.

The results suggest...

Something needs to change



Culture change needed to address smoking

The results suggest...

- Organisations are generally positive and supportive in wanting to address smoking
 - Can see the correlation between smoking and disadvantage
 - Don't agree that staff smoking with consumers is a good way to bond
 - High number are interested in do more to address smoking

The results suggest...

- Gaps in knowledge, skills and resources
 - High number of unsure responses to attitudes - esp. clarifying whether quitting → mental illness relapse
 - Staff need to feel more confident to raise the issue
 - Then staff may become aware of consumer desire to address smoking
- Policies need to be more comprehensive → practices can be more consistent
- Free or subsidised Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is important

Full report is available on MHCC website
www.mhcc.org.au

References:

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2006) Mental Health in Australia: A Snapshot, 2004-05. cat. no. 4824.0.55.001. Canberra: ABS
2. Moeller-Saxone, K. (2008). Cigarette smoking and interest in quitting among consumers at a Psychiatric Disability Rehabilitation and Support Service in Victoria. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 32(5): 479-481.