

WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY

31 MAY 2021 - COMMIT TO QUIT

JUDY BELL'S STORY

"I was a smoker for 14 years, a pack a day of Winfield Gold 25's, or whatever I could get if I needed it, but Winfield Gold was my preference. I took up smoking at the age of 21; I thought it was cool to smoke, thought it was a great stress relief, and after a while, I actually started to really believe it.

It wasn't until, 14 years later at the ages of 35, my cousin sister, who was an even bigger smoker than me, visited my house. She was off the smokes for four days – I was blown away. I couldn't believe she went four days without a smoke; I was so happy and proud of her as she was telling me the how's and why's of her deciding to quit. When she left, I thought to myself, if she can do it, then surely I can, I might have a go.

So a few days later, I went to Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service here in Canberra and signed up for the No More Boondah Program; this was the start of my quitting journey. I changed my morning routine from a cuppa and smoke to applying a nicotine patch on my arm and a half-hour walk before work. I kept the patch on all day and worked hard at breaking the little habits that came with my smoking habit, so I said goodbye to my barista too! After a week of making really changes and I actually felt better and could feel a difference. It wasn't easy, but I kept going.

I was so sad, and I felt like I was in mourning. Whenever I thought about smoking, which was constantly, I would become overwhelmed with grief because Winfield Gold was my best friend for 14 years. Winfield never let me down; Winfield was always there when I need them and always supported me. But what I didn't know was my best friend, Winfield Gold, was making me really sick behind the scenes, and it wasn't until I quit that a lot of health problems started to emerge and I became really sick, so this encouraged me more to stay away from smoking otherwise I wouldn't get better. At this time, there was an ad on TV about smoking where a lady had to tell her kids she was dying from lung cancer. I watched this ad multiple times, and it was only after I decided to give up smoking that it had an effect on me. Being a mother to four, it made me think really hard about what if that happened to me; who would look after my babies? Who would be there? I cried thinking about it, and that to me was my breaking point on smoking. I wanted to be around for my kids, so I stopped the nicotine patches as well. I kept up the walking and stayed away from triggers to keep my mind strong.

I gave up one day before my eldest son turned 16, my last smoke being on the 18th of May 2011. My kids celebrate my achievement with me and tell me how proud they are of me, and we just celebrated my 10th anniversary! Its been a life-changing experience. It wasn't always easy, but with perseverance, you can overcome anything! Surround yourself with positive things, prioritise what's important and work towards it and never give up."

Aboriginal Quitline counsellors offer non-judgemental and empowering support to Aboriginal people who want to quit smoking. Quitline is here to support our mob to live smoke-free. Call Quitline on 13 7848 or visit the website, www.quit.org.au/articles/aboriginal-quitline.