



**MEDIA RELEASE – 30/05/2014**

## **The Tobacco Story of Arnhem Land**

**Teaser trailer release for a groundbreaking documentary on Indigenous smoking**

As part of their comprehensive Tobacco Program, Miwatj Health in collaboration with Round 3 Creative, has produced a documentary to address the high rates of smoking amongst the Yolŋu of East Arnhem Land. This resource is unique in that it brings together new knowledge in health communications and behavioural concepts; underpinned by an ethnographic understanding of Yolŋu people, their culture and traditions around tobacco use. The documentary showcases the cultural position Yolŋu take towards tobacco and the role of the health workforce in addressing this deadly substance. It will contribute to shaping beliefs and attitudes around smoking and health-seeking behaviour, lending support to the efforts to de-normalising tobacco use.

Smoking is the leading preventable cause of ill health and death among Indigenous Australians and contributes significantly to the gap in life expectancy. The health and financial consequences of smoking are far-reaching, with smoking rates in remote Yolŋu communities of around 70% far exceeding the national average. Further, smoking-related health costs in the NT are more than \$764 million per year, even more than alcohol.

The documentary is very different from other health promotion resources in the tobacco arena, in that it tells the story of *how* and *why* smoking rates came to be where they are today. Led by the team of Yolŋu Tobacco Action Workers, particularly a senior elder, Mr. Oscar Garrawirtja from Galiwin'ku and producer/director, Dr Kishan Kariippanon, it does not judge or shame, but acknowledges the very difficult personal journey smokers are on, whilst highlighting the impact it is having today, all told by the voices of Yolŋu from around the region.

This documentary was produced to support the work of the Miwatj Tobacco Program being implemented in 5 communities across East Arnhem Land. It is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health under the broader *Tackling Indigenous Smoking and Healthy Lifestyles Initiative*, part of *Closing the Gap*, being implemented in 57 Aboriginal Health Services around the country. The resource will be of great benefit to tobacco teams around the country as they strive to bring down the high rates of Indigenous smoking.

Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation is a community controlled health service providing comprehensive primary health care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Miwatj region.

**Miwatj Health's "The Tobacco Story of Arnhem Land" will be launched on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2014 on [miwatj.com.au](http://miwatj.com.au)**

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