

# **Interview with Maria Tutaia**

**Interview by Lewis Whaitiri**

**How would you describe your smoking status?**

Non smoker. Never smoked.

**Do you think smoking is more common now than it used to be?**

I think a lot of younger people like myself, like back in intermediate for example they had a lot easier access to get cigarettes.

**Do you think it's still socially acceptable for people to smoke?**

If someone were to smoke around me then I would not like it, I would move away. I can't stand it, so no I don't think it's socially acceptable.

**Why do you think some young people still take up smoking?**

A lot of people try to get in with crowds you know, just being accepted. There are a lot of factors as to why people smoke but I'm guessing that would be the main one.

**Do you think it's socially acceptable to refuse a smoke?**

Yeah definitely. I've refused to smoke many times. I've had a lot of people that have tried to, when I was young, peer pressure me into smoking and to say no is huge, you know. Big ups to the ones that refuse to smoke.

**How hard was it for you to say no?**

I didn't find it very hard. I've got a lot of family members who smoke so I've grown up seeing them. There are a lot of negatives being a smoker you know? Bad breath, teeth, smelly clothes, stuff like that so it was definitely something that didn't appeal to me at all. It was pretty easy saying no.

**Being a sportsperson, do you see a lot of smoking in netball?**

I don't know any netballers who smoke now, and not just from netball - any elite sport. There's no way you could be serious about your profession and want to succeed, and smoke. I wouldn't be where I am right now if it wasn't for growing up seeing what smoking has done to a lot of people, you know? Being smokefree has definitely helped me get to where I am right now.

**Would you go out with a smoker?**

No, definitely not. No can't stand it, definitely wouldn't go out with a smoker. Like I said before odours, staining of teeth, fingernails and stuff like that it's not very attractive at all, so no I definitely wouldn't date a smoker.

**Have any of your family or friends tried and managed to give up smoking?**

No, my sister has tried many times to quit smoking but no, she hasn't been successful yet.

**How do you think you could support and help her to quit?**

I think there are a lot of resources that she could use. I mean I could help her utilise those resources a lot more. I guess just being there for her, supporting her you know, just being there beside her all the way in whatever journey she chooses to make. The resources I know are available...there's the Quitline, there're obviously patches, things at the pharmacy you can use, obviously books or whatever. I mean those resources are out there but it's whether people are willing to use them, that's up to them.

**For those people who have quit smoking, do you think that's a big achievement?**

Definitely. I take my hat off to those who have quit smoking. It's definitely something that's not easy. For me, it's like not eating McDonalds. But no, it's definitely a huge achievement you know, many people have tried to achieve it many times. To accomplish something like that is awesome.

**What are the benefits of being smokefree?**

There are a lot of benefits. Obviously, I mean I'm a very healthy person, I watch what I eat nutrition-wise but I'm saving a lot of money you know? I googled some stuff about trying to be smokefree and people save up to \$4000 a year not buying cigarettes and that's definitely a benefit. Just being fit and healthy.

**What about the benefits of being smokefree as a sportsperson?**

With any sport, there's no way you could be serious and be a smoker at the same time. It's definitely important that people are smokefree. It's not something that is spoken about within the Silver Ferns or Waikato Magic but it would obviously show out there on court lasting a full 60 mins of the game, so yeah it's definitely something that has never crossed our minds. And Smokefree signs are everywhere.

**Did it make you feel left out when your friends smoked when you were young?**

No definitely not. I didn't feel left out or anything. No, my friends were very supportive, just great mates really, we just had a really great friendship, I mean even

though they were smoking we would go out and play and then when they went to smoke they'd know not to be around me.

**Any advice for your friends about being smokefree?**

It's only going to benefit you and the people around you, and obviously people die from smoking every year, thousands and thousands. And if you want to live to see your kids grow up and graduate from school, 21<sup>st</sup> birthdays and stuff, this is definitely the way to go.

**What else do you think New Zealand can do to get behind this issue?**

Non-smoking areas, yeah. I think there's a lot that is being done here in New Zealand. Like I said, the resources are there, there are smokefree areas, nightclubs and a lot of other places as well but it's more the individual and whether they want to live and live a healthy life. I mean I think Smokefree have done a great job in terms of getting the message out there to the local communities and the public but I think it's more the individual and how much they really want it.

**What is your view on the tobacco industry?**

I haven't thought about it, but I mean it's obviously a money making scheme. People are just getting sucked into it and they're killing people.

**How do you feel about being a role model and knowing you can influence people?**

It's definitely important to be smokefree for me and you want to set a good example for the young ones. And I'm sure if they were to see me smoke, I mean a lot of kids are influenced by anything these days you know. I try to portray myself by always staying positive and always giving to the community and just being the best Silver Fern player I can be so if they can see that then you know that kind of speaks for itself. Smoking is a dying image, for our young ones that are growing up watching it, you know breathing it, and living around it.

**Do you support your friends who are trying to quit?**

Yes, yes. I mean I'd always support them even though I'm not there by texting, calling seeing how they are and things like that. I mean you don't have to be there to support them. Like for me, it was more from texting and calling and stuff so to them that kind of went a long way, well I'm hoping it did but you know just for them to know that you're there to support them in what they're trying to achieve is huge.