



## MEDIA RELEASE

27 July 2017

### **4,900 Australians will face a head or neck cancer this year**

*Cancer Council Australia gives heads up on prevention and detection on  
World Head and Neck Cancer Day*

With around 4,900 Australians expected to be diagnosed with a head or neck cancer this year, Cancer Council Australia is using World Head and Neck Cancer Day (27 July) to raise awareness and highlight the steps Australians can take to reduce their risk, as well as the symptoms to look out for.

Head and neck cancers includes cancers of the mouth, throat, nose, sinus, voice-box and neck, which together are expected to cause over 1,000 Australian deaths this year.

Professor Sanchia Aranda, CEO, Cancer Council Australia said that given these cancers are less common, many Australians are not aware of the symptoms, or the key steps that they can take to cut their risk.

“Smoking is an extraordinarily high risk factor for head and neck cancer, causing more than 2,800 oral and throat cancers each year. Australians also don’t seem to realise that alcohol consumption increases their risk – causing around 730 cases of oral and throat cancers each year. If you drink and smoke – your risk is higher still.”

Professor Aranda also explained that some head and neck cancers are caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV).

“We estimate that around 480 throat and mouth cancers each year are caused by HPV. HPV is what causes cervical cancer, but many Australians may not be aware that it can also cause head and neck cancers. This is another reason for teenage boys and girls to get vaccinated when they are offered it through our national immunisation program.”

Professor Aranda said that the causes of head and neck cancers isn’t always clear and unfortunately some people who did all the right things would still be diagnosed, but it was important for some groups to be particularly vigilant.

“Men are three times more likely than women to be diagnosed with head and neck cancer, and those over the age of 40 are at higher risk,” Prof Aranda said.

Professor Aranda said that symptoms of head and neck cancer vary, but can include pain, swelling, hoarse voice, difficulty swallowing, bad breath, a persistent cough or a change in taste.

“If you have any unusual symptoms in your head or neck, it’s important to get them checked out by a GP as soon as possible. With a five year survival rate of 69 percent, many patients with head or neck cancer are successfully treated – but early detection is vital.”

Australians who have been diagnosed with cancer and their carers can contact Cancer Council 13 11 20 to find out more about support and information services.

**ENDS**

Media Contact: Hollie Jenkins 0400 762 010, [hollie.jenkins@cancer.org.au](mailto:hollie.jenkins@cancer.org.au)