

## **New report highlights the \$137 billion cost of smoking**

### ***Cancer Council welcomes increased government investment in tobacco control to save lives and money***

Cancer Council Australia has commended Health Minister Greg Hunt for significantly increasing his funding commitment to a national tobacco public education campaign, following new research showing that smoking led to 20,000 preventable deaths and accounted for \$136.9 billion in social costs in 2015-16.

The release of the new report, [\*Identifying the Social Costs of Tobacco Use in Australia 2015/16\*](#) and increased investment in national tobacco control efforts were announced today by Health Minister Greg Hunt via a video link at the Oceania Tobacco Control Conference.

The latest Government announcement will see the Government spend an additional \$5 million on a tobacco campaign, in addition to the \$20 million over four years previously announced.

The new report provides the first update in 15 years on the costs of smoking in Australia, showing a four time increase in the tangible and intangible costs associated with smoking from an estimated \$31.5 billion in 2004-5 to \$136.9 billion in the latest report.

Tangible costs of smoking identified in the report include \$5 billion in lost productivity and worker absences, \$2 billion for family members caring for someone with a smoking-related disease and \$6.8 billion in health care costs, including the cost of 1.7 million hospital admissions to treat smoking-related conditions.

Intangible costs, such as the years of life lost from premature deaths in that year or lost quality of life from living with a serious illness, were estimated at a massive \$117.7 billion per year.

Professor Sanchia Aranda, CEO, Cancer Council Australia clarified that although smoking rates had decreased over the last 15 years, the estimated costs of smoking had increased since 2004 due to long lead times from the health effects from smoking, researchers being able to identify and measure a wider range of social costs in their latest analysis, and population growth.

“Since analysts last quantified the social costs of smoking, we have been able to identify a wider range of health conditions linked to smoking – diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cataracts and cancers such as liver and bowel cancer. There are now over 50 diseases that we know are directly linked to smoking.

“Researchers have also been able to measure further indirect costs of smoking – such as lost work productivity due to caring for someone with a smoking-related illness and intangible costs such as lost quality of life, pain and suffering.”

Professor Sanchia Aranda, CEO, Cancer Council Australia also commended Minister’s Hunt recommitment to get smoking rates down to 10% by 2025 and said Cancer Council was looking forward to working with Government to achieve that goal.

“Cancer Council NSW research shows that we can save 100,000 lives this century through lung cancer prevention alone if we can get smoking rates to 10% by 2025. The Government has now backed up this goal with the most effective policy measure – mass media public education.”

“We haven’t had a very large, truly national tobacco campaign since 1997, which cost \$9 million and yielded healthcare cost savings of over \$740 million and prevented 55,000 deaths. The sustained investment in this campaign over several years was key to its success.

“Australian smoking rates have dropped dramatically over time – but this report clearly highlights that the job isn’t done yet.

“About two and a half million people are still smoking every day in Australia and tobacco continues to be Australia’s leading cause of preventable disease. The cost of tobacco is not only social and economic, but experienced by the families of the 54 Australian lives we lose every day.

“All of us have a role to play in reducing the impact and cost of smoking to Australia. It takes a comprehensive and coordinated approach.”

The latest research and perspectives on tobacco control from the Australia-Pacific region will be showcased over the next three days at the Oceania Tobacco Control Conference. The conference is being hosted by Cancer Council NSW in partnership with the NSW Government and Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council of NSW, with support from the Australian Government, the Heart Foundation and Menzies School of Health Research.

## **ENDS**

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### **About the Oceania Tobacco Control Conference**

This year’s Oceania Tobacco Control Conference (OTCC) is hosted by Cancer Council NSW. Cancer Council is Australia’s leading cancer charity working across every aspect of every cancer. Every day, we support families affected by cancer when they need it most, speak out on behalf of the community on cancer issues, empower people to reduce their cancer risk, and find new ways to better detect and treat cancer. With your help, we’re getting closer to a cancer free future every minute, every hour, every day.