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Opposition's \$40m plan to revive national anti-smoking campaign could save 55,000 lives

Cancer Council Australia has commended the federal Opposition for its \$40 million commitment to revive Australia's landmark National Tobacco Campaign, which could prevent more than 55,000 deaths and save at least \$740 million in healthcare costs.

Cancer Council Australia CEO, Professor Sanchia Aranda, said the Opposition's \$40 million plan would be the most significant investment in anti-smoking ads at the national level for the general population in almost a decade.

"The two most successful interventions for reducing smoking rates in Australia nationally have been hard-hitting anti-smoking campaigns and tobacco tax increases," Professor Aranda said.

"In recent years cost has emerged as the main motivating factor driving Australians to quit smoking, due to our world-leading tobacco excise regime. However, health concerns have fallen away as a motivation for giving up smoking.

"Reminding smokers of the harms they are doing to their health with a renewed National Tobacco Campaign will back up the excise regime and could get drops in smoking prevalence back on track.

"Setting a target of 10 per cent smoking prevalence and backing it with a renewed funding commitment to one of Australia's signature public health programs should be commended."

Professor Aranda said it was important that the Opposition had committed to allocate the funds in specific bursts, to maximise the impact of campaigns.

A targeted campaign over six months in 1997, costing \$9 million, prevented an estimated 55,000 deaths and saved \$740 million in healthcare costs.

"The commitment to run campaigns in intense bursts over the four-year funding period has the potential to reduce healthcare costs even more than previous campaigns, considering costs have inflated over the past 22 years."

Professor Aranda also commended the Opposition's commitment to boost lung cancer awareness, early detection and patient support.

"We don't have the evidence to support screening for lung cancer, but there are opportunities in early detection that should be explored," she said.

"Lung cancer kills more than twice as many Australians than the second-leading cause of cancer death, bowel cancer, yet due to undeserved stigma and poor public support compared to other cancers, it is poorly researched."

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