

Media Release

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Tobacco tax will help save 360,000 Australians from a two-in-three risk of early death

Excise increase 'great news' for the nation's health

Around 320,000 adult Australian smokers are likely to quit and 40,000 teenagers deterred from taking up smoking as a result of expected tobacco tax increases in the 2016-17 federal budget, resulting in a major reduction in the nation's cancer burden.

Cancer Council Australia CEO, Professor Sanchia Aranda, said the tax increases would translate to tens of thousands of cancer deaths prevented in Australia and a significant improvement in the nation's health.

"The tobacco tax announcement is great news for Australia's health," Professor Aranda said. "Based on analyses of the benefits of previous tobacco tax increases, 320,000 smokers are likely to quit over the longer term as a result of an expected series of 12.5% annual tobacco tax increases.

"In addition, 40,000 teenagers will be deterred from smoking altogether – adding to a continued decline in the number of teenagers in Australia who smoke.

"Two in three Australian smokers die prematurely of smoking-caused disease, with cancer being the most significant cause of death.

"There are 16 cancer types caused by smoking, so a policy intervention with such extraordinary capacity to reduce smoking prevalence will see a major reduction in Australia's cancer death rates."

Professor Aranda said the Australian Government should be commended for introducing the increases. The federal Opposition, which had previously announced its commitment to a series of 12.5% increases, should also be commended.

"Both sides of politics in Australia have shown great courage and commitment to anti-smoking policies over the past 40 years, which is the main reason Australia has one of the world's lowest smoking rates," she said.

"Yet smoking remains the number one preventable cause of cancer death in Australia by a significant margin. The tobacco tax increases announced will make a significant impact on tobacco-related cancer death rates.

"Tobacco tax increases are particularly effective in deterring smoking among people on lower incomes, who bear a disproportionate burden of tobacco disease burden."

Professor Aranda said the revenue would also assist governments in funding other tobacco control measures such as hard-hitting media campaigns and support for quit services.

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