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New data reveals a key way to reduce smoking rates, and save money

Almost three-quarters of smokers (74%) say they would try and quit the habit if cigarette prices increased by 50% according to new research released today.

The research, from the Cancer Council Victoria, also reveals 6 out of 10 regular smokers say they would smoke fewer cigarettes if tobacco prices were to go up by 50%.

Increasing price by 50% would see a typical packet of 30 cigarettes retail at around the \$20 mark.

Fiona Sharkie from Quit said not only is an increase in cigarette prices the most important factor driving a drop in smoking rates across the whole population, it is also great for the average smoker's hip pocket.

"With tobacco claiming 15 000 Australians lives and costing the community \$31.5 billion dollars every year it is critical that proven tobacco control strategies, such as price increases, are implemented as soon as possible."

"On top of quitting smoking being one of the best things you can do for your health, it is also a great way to save money in tough financial times. A pack a day smoker can save almost \$5000 a year by quitting. That's more than two monthly mortgage repayments on the average Australian home loan."

Dr Lyn Roberts from the National Heart Foundation said the data provides invaluable information for the National Preventative Health Taskforce, which is currently considering strategies to address tobacco use in Australia.

"Research such as this provides critical insight into the best ways to reduce smoking."

"The public health gains from a drop in smoking in Australia are both huge and indisputable. However, unless there is ongoing exposure to mass-reach interventions, such as price increases, we will not see any population-level change."

Professor Ian Olver from Cancer Council Australia said by increasing the cost of cigarettes, the Australian Government would be adopting an effective measure to 'close the gap' in health inequalities.

"Research illustrates price increases not only reduce the number of people smoking but also the amount smoked by remaining smokers, with greater drops observed among those in economically disadvantaged groups."

The data also revealed:

- The proportions of smokers from all socio-economic status (SES) groups reporting that they would quit smoking were higher for a 50% price increase compared with a 28% price increase, with around three quarters of all smokers stating that they would quit smoking if the price of cigarettes increased by 50% (74%, 75%, and 70% of low-, mid- and high-SES smokers respectively).
- 81% of Victorian adults approve of increasing tax on cigarettes if the money went toward services to assist smokers to quit smoking.
- More than 60% of current smokers were in favour of a tax increase on cigarettes

To organise an interview with Fiona Sharkie, Dr Lyn Roberts or Professor Ian Olver, please contact Edwina Pearse on 0417 303 811 or 03 9635 5400