

Cost of cigarettes biggest motivator for quitting

Cancer Council has welcomed new research showing the proportion of Australian smokers motivated to quit by the rising cost of tobacco products has increased from 35.8% to almost 52% in the past decade.

Professor Sanchia Aranda, CEO, Cancer Council Australia, said discouraging smoking through product price increases was one of the most effective strategies to reduce the harms of tobacco.

“Today’s research from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare shows that the relative influence of price as a motivator for people to quit has increased significantly since 2007, a decade which featured five substantial tobacco tax rises,” she said.

“Tobacco tax is one of the main reasons smoking prevalence in Australia has dropped from 16.6% to 12.2% over that 10-year period.”

Professor Aranda said that while Australian smoking rates were now at a historical low, the rate of quitting had slowed, highlighting the need for renewed investment in antismoking campaigns.

“Tobacco tax works even better if complemented by hard-hitting antismoking campaigns. The proportion of people reporting that government ads motivated them to quit has declined in step with reduced funding for campaigns.

“If governments invest more in campaigns, more people will quit. And more people who report attempting to quit because of price increases are likely to follow through, with the help of powerful reminders of the risks they take by smoking.”

Professor Aranda commended the Australian Government for its ongoing commitment to antismoking ads targeting Indigenous Australians, such as the Break the Chain and Don’t Make Smokes Your Story campaigns.

“Indigenous smoking rates have dropped by more than 20% since 2010, from around 35% to 27%,” she said. “We should expect further declines as a result of the Government’s current media strategy.

“Smoking is still the leading cause of cancer death in Australia. We need more of what works to reduce that burden. Evidence shows that tax increases supported by powerful health messaging are a powerful combination to help people quit.”

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