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MARK WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY WITH NEW ANTI-SMOKING CAMPAIGN TO RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF DANGERS

World No Tobacco Day is an opportunity for the newly re-elected Federal Government to make good on its commitment to reinvigorate national anti-smoking campaigns, AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today.

World No Tobacco Day is observed each year on 31 May to highlight the harms associated with tobacco and to encourage action from individuals, communities and governments to support decreased use of tobacco.

“For many years, Australia has been considered a world leader in tobacco control, with plain packaging, graphic warnings, restrictions on advertising and continued increases in excise,” Dr Bartone said.

“As a result, smoking rates in Australia halved between 1991 and 2016, from 24 per cent to 12 percent.

“Despite these declines, smoking continues to be the leading preventable cause of death and disease in Australia, and it is a leading risk factor for many chronic health conditions.

“Tobacco is unique among consumer products in that it causes disease and premature death when used exactly as intended.

“Two in three smokers will die as a result of smoking. Smoking increases the risk for coronary heart disease, stroke, peripheral vascular disease, respiratory disease and many cancers.

“World No Tobacco Day provides an important opportunity to discuss quitting strategies with current smokers. Hopefully it also encourages many smokers to engage in a quit attempt.

“The AMA welcomed the Coalition’s \$20 million commitment to reinvigorate national anti-smoking campaigns, and the specific measures to tackle Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smoking rates announced in the April Budget.

“We need to see real action and movement on anti-smoking campaigns that can help the seven out of 10 smokers who say they want to quit this deadly habit.

“GPs can help smokers by discussing the realities of a quit attempt, including how to avoid common triggers, as well as the potential role of medication and nicotine replacement therapy.

“This targeted support must be complemented by population level measures to reinforce the dangers associated with tobacco use, particularly to young people who are known to be more vulnerable to messages that glamorise smoking.

“The tobacco industry has shown us that we must not become complacent. Our world-leading anti-tobacco strategy is on the brink of stalling and risks failing the next generation of Australians.

“We know that exposure to tobacco advertising, though any medium, can influence a young person’s decision to try or take up smoking. We must continue to ensure that smoking is not normalised, for young people, as well as the rest of the community.”

The AMA *Position Statement on Tobacco Smoking and E-cigarettes* is at <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/tobacco-smoking-and-e-cigarettes-2015>

Background

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) data shows that:

- Tobacco is the leading cause of cancer in Australia.
- Around one in 10 mothers smoked in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy.
- There has been a long-term downward trend in daily tobacco smoking since 1991 (24 per cent to 12 per cent in 2016).
- There has been an increase in the number of people choosing to never take up smoking (62 per cent in 2016, up from 51 per cent in 2001).
- In 2016, around one in three (31 per cent) current smokers aged 14 and over have ever used e-cigarettes.
- 57 per cent of daily smokers were aged over 40 in 2016.
- 20 per cent of daily smokers lived in remote and very remote areas of Australia.
- Of the current smokers in secondary school aged 16-17, more than one quarter (26 per cent) smoked daily.

In 2014-15, the Heart Foundation reported that:

- one in seven (14 per cent) Australians aged 15 years and over smoked daily.
- More than 1.6 million Australian males aged 15 and over smoked, 90 per cent of whom smoked daily.
- More than 1.2 million Australian females aged 15 and over smoked, 91 per cent of whom smoked daily.

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