

[30 May 2012]

Vulnerable Groups Continue to Smoke World No Tobacco Day 2012

“Tobacco smoking is the single most preventable cause of ill health and death in Australia, contributing to more drug-related hospitalisations and deaths than alcohol and illicit drug use combined.” said Carrie Fowlie, Executive Officer of the peak body the Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT (ATODA).

“About half of the smokers who continue to smoke for a prolonged period will die early.”

“The 2010 National Drug Strategy Household Survey shows that 12% of ACT residents aged 14 years and over are daily smokers. This is good news, lower than the Australian average and an improvement on the 2007 survey.”

“Unfortunately there is resistance in vulnerable population groups to this downward trend. Our efforts and resources should be directed to these areas.”

“Given the high cost of smoking related morbidity, it’s not surprising that the evidence points to a considerable return on investment when directing public health resources to this end.”

“The survey suggests that certain population groups are more likely to smoke. People living in areas with the lowest socio-economic status smoked many more cigarettes per week than those living in areas with highest.”

“People who speak English as their main language at home smoke more than those who speak a language other than English.”

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have high smoking rates and are a priority group for tobacco support.”

“Almost 90% of adult smokers become dependent on tobacco before the age of 18 years. The result of this is that the person who reaches adulthood without taking up smoking is unlikely to ever start. Only about 5% of smokers in Australia take up the habit after age 25.”

“This underlines the importance of providing effective prevention measures aimed at young people, to get them through the time when they are most vulnerable to take up smoking.”

For further information or comment please contact:
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Background

World No Tobacco Day is observed around the world every year on 31 May. It aims to encourage abstinence from tobacco and draw global attention to tobacco use and its negative health effects, which are estimated to cause an annual 5 million deaths worldwide.

World No Tobacco Day is coordinated by the World Health Organization. The theme for 2012 will be 'tobacco industry interference' and will focus on the need to expose and counter big tobacco's increasingly aggressive attempts to undermine the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

While it is worthwhile to focus on international, multinational-corporate issues on a day like this, it's also worth noting that there are still smaller-scale local issues that require policy and program responses at a local level. It is a case of 'Think Globally, Act Locally'.

For further information see: www.who.int/tobacco/wntd/en

The *ACT Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Strategy 2010-2014* identifies a number of groups for priority focus for intervention in terms of tobacco use. These are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Adults in detention
- Juveniles in detention
- People with mental illness
- People who use alcohol and other drugs
- Women with low-to-middle incomes, and
- Men with low-to-middle incomes.

For further information see: www.health.act.gov.au/publications/alcohol-and-other-drug