



MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia's peak tobacco-control body praises Indigenous smoking initiative

Today's announcement of an allocation of \$183.7m over four years to continue the Tackling Indigenous Smoking initiative is very welcome news, says Maurice Swanson, President of the Australian Council on Smoking and Health.

Mr Swanson said the Commonwealth Government and the Minister for Aboriginal Health, Hon Ken Wyatt MHR, should be congratulated for continuing funding for this successful program.

"There have been encouraging downward trends in the prevalence of smoking among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that mirror the reduction in non-Indigenous Australians, but smoking rates started from a much higher level so still have come down," he said. "Tackling Indigenous Smoking activities will raise awareness of the health hazards of smoking and build support for individuals, families and communities to quit smoking."

Targeted strategies for tobacco control in Indigenous communities would benefit greatly from certainty of funding over the next four years.

"Working collaboratively is vital in this complex area," Mr Swanson said. "Partnerships over time between community groups, health workers, schools, government service providers and employers need stability to implement long-term change".

The mass media campaign [Don't make smokes your story](#) by the Federal Department of Health also supported cessation with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers aged 18-40 years.

There was strong evidence that mass media campaigns were a good return on investment.

"To reduce smoking among all Australians, funding for mass media needs to increase to the levels seen in the late 1990s when hard-hitting media campaigns were seen in households across Australia.

“These campaigns encouraged smoking cessation and discouraged young people from starting to smoke.

“We look forward to more support in the May Budget for well-funded mass media strategies in Australia – both culturally specific campaigns for Indigenous people and general campaigns – to reach everyone,” Mr Swanson said.

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For further information contact:
Maurice Swanson
President
Australian Council on Smoking and Health on 0401 090915