



Media Release. January 31, 2018.

## **76% of South Australian voters want the age for purchasing cigarettes raised to 21 @dontsmoke21 #dontsmoke21**

Three-quarters of South Australian voters want the legal age for buying cigarettes in the state to be raised from 18 to 21, according to new YouGov Galaxy polling.

The poll of 1051 voters in three knife-edge seats – Hartley, Hurtle Vale and Mawson - found 76% supported lifting the age for buying cigarettes to 21.

In the lead up to the March South Australian election, the polling, commissioned by the Minderoo Foundation on behalf of the Eliminate Cancer Initiative (ECI), reveals a fifth of soft<sup>1</sup> voters will back the party that pledges to implement this simple but life-saving policy.

There was majority support for change in all seats and across demographics.

Crucially, 70% of younger votes (aged 18-29) and a majority of smokers (58%) support the policy.

ECI, set up with \$75 million of seed funding by leading philanthropists, Nicola and Andrew Forrest AO, says its own modelling shows South Australia will save \$180 million to \$220 million per annum, and the nation \$1.8 billion, in health and economic costs each year.

This economic analysis does not consider the incalculable costs of pain, suffering and loss to patients and family.

Every year smoking kills 15,000 Australians<sup>2</sup>. ECI is calling on all state and territory governments to act swiftly on lifting the age people can buy cigarettes to 21 to prevent young Australians becoming hooked on cigarettes for life.

“It is time we take action to protect young Australians from life-long tobacco addictions,” Mr Forrest said.

“Kids try most things as they learn and experiment with life. Some things they disregard while others become part of them - they choose. The hideous cruelty of smoking is that once tobacco companies have someone hooked on cigarettes, they can't put them down.

“I commend SA Best for promising to pursue this policy to help save young lives and we call on all other parties to follow suit,” Mr Forrest said. “This polling leaves no doubt any party that does so will receive tremendous support from the public.”

The South Australian results were similar to QLD where polling in the marginal state seats showed 80% support for this step change policy. **ENDS**

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<sup>1</sup> A soft voter is considered someone undecided or prepared to change their mind: Galaxy

<sup>2</sup> Collins D, Lapsley H. The costs of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drug abuse to Australian society in 2004–05. Canberra: Department of Health and Ageing;2008.

**Eliminate Cancer Initiative**

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**Background facts:**

1. There are approximately 1,140 tobacco-attributed deaths in South Australia every year<sup>3</sup>
2. In 2016, 14.9% of South Australians aged 15 years and over smoked (daily, weekly or less often than weekly). This was in line with 15.7% in both 2014 and 2015, and was lower than 2013 (19.4%).<sup>4</sup>
3. Smoking prevalence was higher among males (16.7%) than females (13.3%).<sup>5</sup>
4. Smoking prevalence among 15-29 year olds was 12.3%, or 10.5% for daily smokers.<sup>6</sup>

*Polling results can be accessed at [www.stopsmokingbeforeitstarts.org.au](http://www.stopsmokingbeforeitstarts.org.au)*

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<sup>3</sup> South Australian Health & Medical Research Institute. Key Smoking Statistics for South Australia 2016/17 [https://www.sahmri.org/m/downloads/Key\\_Smoking\\_Statistics\\_for\\_SA\\_2016.pdf](https://www.sahmri.org/m/downloads/Key_Smoking_Statistics_for_SA_2016.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

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