

Report reveals reduced smoking in the Northern Territory

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An independent Annual Report on Tobacco Control in the Northern Territory (NT) which summarises progress towards reducing smoking in the Territory has been released on World No Tobacco Day.

The Annual Report of the NT Tobacco Control Advisory Committee (NTTCAC) indicates smoking in the NT has been falling, and in the last year there has been increased activity by health organisations and governments to reduce smoking in the Territory.

NTTCAC was established two years ago by the NT Government to provide leadership and advice on tobacco control in the NT and is chaired by Associate Professor David Thomas of the Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies).

In the last year in the NT there have been increased anti-smoking mass-media campaigns, an increase in the numbers of health staff working to reduce Indigenous smoking, some increase in smoke-free areas, and the introduction of the world-leading plain-packaging laws. The Annual Report features examples of this work in the Territory.

The Annual Report cites recent research that estimated that smoking causes 170 deaths a year in the NT, and costs the NT \$764m a year. Smoking is also responsible for 21 percent of the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous NT men and 14 percent for NT women.

“The Northern Territory has the highest Indigenous and non-Indigenous smoking rates in Australia, but both have been falling. This means reducing smoking rates is achievable in the Territory, if we build on the good work of recent years,” Assoc Prof Thomas said.

“We welcome the Australian Government’s funding increase for the Northern Territory workforce to tackle smoking among Indigenous people. However, this needs to be maintained and complemented by sustained funding and attention by the NT Government,” Assoc Prof Thomas said.

“The Annual Report recommends that the Australian Government should significantly increase the tax on cigarettes, as increasing the tax and price of cigarettes has been shown to make the strongest impact of any policy on reducing smoking,” he said.

Assoc Prof Thomas said more can be done to protect Territorians from the dangers of second-hand smoke.

“In particular, the NT Government must protect our kids by banning smoking in cars with kids, as has occurred everywhere else in Australia,” he said.

“Finally, we congratulate all Territorians who have quit in the last year, and all our kids who have chosen to stay smokefree and healthy,” said Assoc Prof Thomas.

The full report is available at:

http://www.health.nt.gov.au/library/scripts/objectifyMedia.aspx?file=pdf/84/23.pdf&siteID=1&str_title=Tobacco Control Advisory Committee Annual Report 2013.pdf

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Background: Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) are Australia's only Medical Research Institute dedicated to improving Indigenous health and wellbeing. We have a 27-year history of scientific discovery and public health achievement. Menzies work at the frontline and collaborate broadly, partnering with over 60 Indigenous communities across Northern Australia to create resources, grow local skills, and find enduring solutions to problems that matter.