

Encouraging Indigenous smoking and quitting trends in latest ABS Report

19 October 2017

The latest report by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) provides encouraging news about national smoking trends among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the 20 year period from 1994 to 2014/15.

According to the Head of the Tobacco Control Research Program at Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies), Professor David Thomas who collaborated with the ABS on the report, the research shows that each year more Indigenous Australians are successfully quitting smoking, fewer children are taking up smoking, and so there are fewer smokers.

“This is reassuring news for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities. These statistics may encourage more smokers to quit and more kids to stay smokefree because they give a message that others are doing it and so can they,” Prof Thomas said.

“It is very important to celebrate such improvements which are certain to lead to sustained improvements in Indigenous health outcomes. Too often we just focus on the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and what it tells us about fairness in Australia. In this case there has been little change in the gap as there have been improvements in both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations.

“These improvements are in part due to the increased attention on tackling Indigenous smoking by Aboriginal health services and governments. The investment of significant government funding for Indigenous smoking is justified and must be sustained.

“The improvements in both quitting and smoking prevalence were significantly greater in non-remote areas. But even in remote communities, where there has been no significant improvement in smoking prevalence or successful quitting, the report demonstrates that increasing numbers of smokers are trying to quit but are not succeeding.

“More support is needed in remote communities to help smokers to stay quit,” Prof Thomas said

For further information, the full report is available in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: Smoking Trends, Australia, 1994 to 2014–15 (cat. no. 4737.0), <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4737.0>

ENDS

Professor Thomas is available for interview –
View his profile at: www.menzies.edu.au/page/Our_People/Researchers/David_Thomas/

Media contact:

Paul Dale, senior communications officer

Phone: 0439 108 754 or (08) 8946 8658 | Email: communications@menzies.edu.au

Menzies School of Health Research

Menzies School of Health Research is one of Australia's leading medical research institutes dedicated to improving Indigenous, global and tropical health. Menzies has a history of over 30 years of scientific discovery and public health achievement. Menzies works at the frontline, joining with partners across the Asia-Pacific as well as Indigenous communities across northern and central Australia. Menzies collaborates to create new knowledge, grow local skills and find enduring solutions to problems that matter.