

Smoking rates continue to drop

Written by Emma Bourke Media & Communications Manager Heart Foundation,



Melbourne. 17 July 2015. New data released today shows smoking rates continue to decline, with the National Heart Foundation of Australia thrilled with the statistics saying it will result in less death and suffering caused by smoking.

The 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey [i]by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) shows that:

- Daily tobacco smoking declined significantly between 2010 and 2013 (from 15.1% to 12.8%). Daily smoking rates have almost halved since 1991 (24.3%).
- Younger people are delaying the take up of smoking—the age at which 14–24-year-olds smoked their first full cigarette increased from 14.2 in 1995 to 15.9 years in 2013.

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· Smokers reduced the average number of cigarettes smoked per week; from 111 cigarettes in 2010 to 96 in 2013.

Heart Foundation's national tobacco control spokesperson Maurice Swanson said the improvements in Australia's smoking rates are a rousing endorsement of the tobacco control policies pursued by all governments over recent years.

"We are world leaders in tobacco control and have done amazing work with plain packaging and price and tax measures," Mr Swanson said.

"But we need more to be done in consumer media campaigns, and the introduction of more smoke-free public places, as well as regulating limits on how much nicotine and levels of carcinogens tobacco companies can add into their products.

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“It’s great news that younger people are delaying the take up of smoking, we credit this to plain packaging, which is was introduced to make smoking less attractive to children and to ultimately reduce the take up of young smokers.

“While it’s great that those who are smoking are smoking less cigarettes, unfortunately for their health there are no safe levels of smoking.”

Mr Swanson added that while these statistics show great success, we can’t be complacent. While smoking rates have dropped thanks to Australia’s tobacco controls, we still have millions of Australians who smoke daily.

“We do need to keep the pedal to the metal if we are to keep pushing these figures down and one day end the carnage cause by smoking,” he said.

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“We know that smoking rates are higher in lower income and particular multicultural groups and it’s important to turn our focus on the groups most at risk.

“It’s also important to keep the focus on the Indigenous tobacco control initiative, currently being reviewed and to think about the next wave of innovative policies that can get us down to a situation where smoking is rare.”

Smoking causes more than 12,000 preventable deaths from heart disease, stroke and blood vessel disease each year in Australia.

“Smokers know their risk of cancer, but many are unaware of their risk of heart disease and a subsequent heart attack,” he added.

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