

Tobacco

FACTS

For MPs

TOBACCO COSTS BLOW OUT TO \$21b

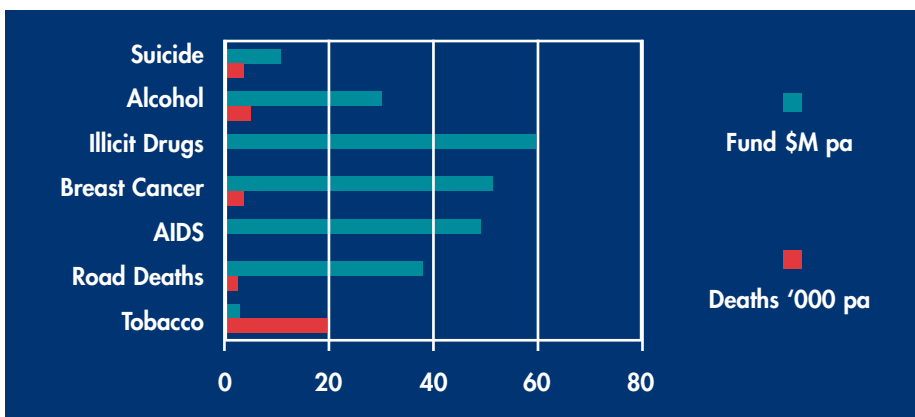
"Tobacco abuse" is costing Australia a staggering \$21b a year – more than \$1000 per person. Latest research from the National Drug Strategy* confirms that each year tobacco:

- kills more than 19,000 Australians; and
- costs the nation over \$21b in health care, business and other social costs.



Although the report identifies 40% of these costs as avoidable, health groups are concerned that recent declines in smoking rates have led to a view that "enough has been done". As a result, funding for anti-smoking education remains very low in comparison with other public health campaigns (see graph below) and evidence on best practice funding commitments in OECD countries.

* Collins DJ & Lapsley HM, "Counting the cost: estimates of the social costs of drug abuse in Australia in 1998-9", Monograph No.49, National Drug Strategy 2002; at www.health.gov.au/pubhlth/publicat/document/mono49.pdf.



Smoking costs are triple those of illicit drugs

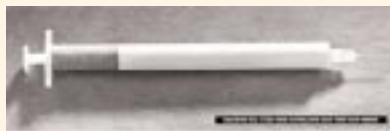
The financial impact of tobacco far outweighs that of illicit drugs, says National Drug Strategy research.

The Collins and Lapsley study* included for the first time an estimate of the impact of passive smoking and new data on costs of absenteeism, drugs, ambulances, fires, crime, and litter.

The report estimates that tobacco costs the nation:

- almost three times as much as any other category of drug abuse; and
- more than all other drugs combined – 61.2% of the total costs of abuse.

Tobacco is by far our No. 1 drug problem, causing around 80% of all drug-related deaths. Yet preventive measures are poorly funded averaging \$2m a year (av. Fed Govt Budget funding commitment, 1994/2005) – despite causing more deaths, disease and social costs than other drugs combined.



"More addictive than heroin"
(Cancer Foundation WA Inc)

April 2003

Since 2001, a coalition of leading health and medical organisations has been seeking support from all parties for:

Three programs and seven policies outlined in "Tobacco Control: A blue chip investment in public health," (Feb 2001) including:

- Providing commercially realistic funding for public education; and
- Funding a comprehensive, evidence-based tobacco dependence treatment program for smokers.

VCTC, "Tobacco Control: A Blue Chip Investment", 2001, at www.vctc.org.au

Tobacco prevention: \$2 saved for every \$1 invested...

- There is now a large body of evidence from Australia and overseas showing that comprehensive tobacco control programs, including commercially realistic funding for anti-smoking mass media campaigns, will significantly reduce tobacco related diseases, deaths and disabilities.

VCTC, "Blue Chip" submission (above).

- New findings quantifying the returns on preventive health measures have identified smoking prevention as extremely cost-effective, saving the federal government \$344 million – or \$2 for every \$1 spent on anti-smoking programs – over the last three decades.

Media release by Kay Patterson, Minister for Health and Ageing, 25 November 2002 at www.health.gov.au/mediarel/yr2002/kp/kp02129.htm.

... and a vote-winner

Opinion polls consistently show the public strongly supports tougher tobacco controls by governments.

See Nat. Drug Strategy Household Survey 2001; Walsh RA et al, Aust & NZ J Public Health 2002;26:536-42.

An information bulletin for MPs from Australia's leading health organisations:

Action on Smoking and Health, Australian Medical Association, The Cancer Council Australia and National Heart Foundation of Australia



PASSIVE SMOKE KILLS 200 AUSTRALIANS



A YEAR – half of them children

Calls for better funded and integrated education campaigns and smokefree pubs and clubs have grown, following latest research on harm to children and hospitality workers. The report* quantifies the costs of passive smoking, \$47m in health care alone, and says passive or involuntary smoking is killing 224 Australians a year – including 103 children under 15 years of age.

Graphic warnings have 'amazing impact'

An evaluation* of new colour picture health warnings in Canada has shown they have become a significant factor in smokers' decisions about quitting.

- 44% of smokers said the new warnings increased their motivation to quit;
- 58% of smokers said they thought more about the health effects;
- 27% of smokers were motivated to smoke less inside their home;
- 35% of smokers have learned more about the health effects than they did before; and
- the warnings have had greater impact on those with lower levels of education.

www.cancer.ca/ccs/internet/standard/0,3182,3172_334419_436437_langId-en,00.html

Philip Morris pleads Guilty



The conviction of Philip Morris last year in a Sydney Magistrates Court for breaching tobacco advertising restrictions under the NSW Public Health Act hasn't deterred tobacco promoters from targeting young people at several youth concerts including the Big Day Out. The review of the Tobacco Advertising Prohibition Act provides an important opportunity for MPs to seek an end to all forms of tobacco promotions including: \$1m fines for breaches; an end to exemptions; and a licensing scheme banning mobile sellers and operators who sell to children.



▲ Glamour girls promoting Alpine at fashion event, Melbourne 2002.

NEW WARNINGS OVERDUE FOR SMOKERS

Cabinet is expected to sign off on larger, graphic and more accurate warnings on cigarette packets in the next few months, following in the wake of an international trend to improve consumer warnings for poorly-informed smokers.

Health groups are concerned about any delays over the new warnings, as the 3.5m Australians who smoke should not be denied full and honest information about the harm caused by tobacco products.



◀ Graphic packet warnings like this from Health Canada have had a big impact.

Australia to sign first treaty to reduce global epidemic

An international treaty on tobacco control is due to be presented to the World Health Assembly in May for sign-off by member nations, including Australia.



Tobacco has been responsible for the death of more than 60m people in the past 50 years, and the World Health Organization (WHO) predicts that it will kill more than 100m people in the next 20 years – most from developing countries.

Congratulations to the Australian delegation for its leadership role.

More at www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/healthrpt/stories/s798029.htm

For briefings or parliamentary questions

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