

MEDIA RELEASE



EMBARGOED UNTIL NOON 4 OCTOBER 2006

4 October 2006

Smoking's no longer cool at high school

Youth smoking rates in Tasmania have plunged to their lowest level in over 20 years, a survey of secondary school students has found.

Compiled every three years by The Cancer Council, the 2005 smoking survey found 12% of secondary students had smoked in the previous week, down from 17% in 2002.

The survey also found that while 15% of 12 to 17-year-old students had smoked in the past month and 26% in the past year, 94% of these were confident they would not be smoking in 12 months.

Cancer Council Tasmania CEO Lawson Ride said the results showed that the anti-smoking message was getting through and that the government's anti-tobacco measures were beginning to work.

"It appears that despite the tobacco industry's best efforts, smoking is no longer seen as attractive or cool by secondary school students," Mr Ride said.

"However, there is no room for complacency because there are still too many young Tasmanian's smoking," he said.

The survey estimated that more than 4300 12 to 17-year-old secondary students smoked nearly 100,000 cigarettes a week between them.

Although more girls than boys had smoked in the past 12 months, there was little difference between the sexes in smoking rates in the month or week prior to the survey.

Only 16% of 12 to 17-year-olds thought it easy for them to buy cigarettes from shops. Of those students who smoked, 43% said they had received cigarettes from friends and 13% from parents.

"The Cancer Council congratulates the state government for introducing some of Australia's toughest anti-smoking laws. It is obvious that legislation is working, but we can and must go further to "de-normalise" smoking," Mr Ride said.

"The proposals put forward earlier this year by the health minister to further control tobacco sales and smoking are most timely and will build on this momentum.

“The federal government must legislate to ban branding and advertising designed to entrap impressionable young people, and replace the sophisticated images and bright colours on cigarette packs with plain packaging.

“We also need legislation to remove all enticements to our youngsters to smoke, including cigarette advertising in shops.”

Mr Ride warned that the federal government should act decisively to stub out the online promotion of tobacco products.

“We must do all we can to prevent tobacco companies from exploiting possible loopholes in cigarette advertising restrictions, particularly on the internet, a medium young people have made their own.

“Every puff of cigarette smoke harms and every cigarette promotes addiction; there is no time to waste. We must maintain this momentum to save more young Tasmanians from the fatal addiction of tobacco.”

For comment please call Lawson Ride on 0418 129 757

Ends

Table 8:
Proportion of Tasmanian students aged 12 to 15 years and 16 to 17 years smoking in various recency periods, 2002–2005

Year	12–15 years		16–17 years		12–17 years	
	2002	2005	2002	2005	2002	2005
Males (%)						
Smoked in past 12 months [^]	28**	21	47**	30	33**	23
Smoked in the past 4 weeks [^]	17	13	27	20	20**	15
Smoked in past 7 days (current smoker) [^]	14*	10	19	15	15**	11
Smoked on 3 or more days [^]	10*	7	16*	10	11**	7
Mean cigarettes smoked per week by current smokers [#]	24	24	35	28	27	25
Females (%)						
Smoked in past 12 months [^]	33*	26	51**	34	38**	28
Smoked in the past 4 weeks [^]	20*	15	35**	20	24**	16
Smoked in past 7 days (current smoker) [^]	16*	12	29**	14	20**	12
Smoked on 3 or more days [^]	11	9	25**	10	15**	9
Mean cigarettes smoked per week by current smokers [#]	22	21	42**	22	29	22
Total (%)						
Smoked in past 12 months [^]	31**	23	49**	32	36**	26
Smoked in the past 4 weeks [^]	18**	14	31**	20	22**	15
Smoked in past 7 days (current smoker) [^]	15**	11	24**	14	17**	12
Smoked on 3 or more days [^]	10*	8	21**	10	13**	8
Mean cigarettes smoked per week by current smokers [#]	23	22	39**	24	28	23

[^]Weighted data. [#]Unweighted data.

*Significantly different to 2005 at p<.05. **Significantly different to 2005 at p<.01.