

# HEALTH REPORT

[www.healthreport.com.au](http://www.healthreport.com.au)

- EMBARGOED UNTIL MONDAY 25 JULY 2005 -

## **MOST AUSTRALIAN SMOKERS SUPPORT SMOKING BAN IN CARS WITH CHILDREN**

A new report shows that 73 percent of Australian smokers support the banning of smoking in cars carrying children.

The finding comes in national polling by Action on Smoking (ASH) Australia and healthcare company Pfizer Australia, released in today's Pfizer Australia Health Report.

19 percent of Australians are regular smokers with a further 1.6 percent smoking less than weekly. The poll found that 73 percent of smokers support the banning of smoking in cars carrying children with 90 percent of Australians overall in favour of smoke-free cars.

Furthermore, nearly two in three Australians think the timing of the State governments' introduction of smoking bans in hotels is too slow, including half of all smokers.

In terms of futuristic tobacco control policies, the survey reveals a high level of support by the majority of Australians.

For example, 82 percent of respondents feel that tobacco companies should put "profits" from teenage smoking into education campaigns run by government.

A further 90 percent support the concept of reduced fire risk cigarettes, while 93 percent feel that cigarette chemicals should be regulated.

Despite this, more than half the smokers surveyed were unable to identify tobacco as the leading drug-related cause of death in this country.

The research's release, just seven months from the introduction of graphic new pictorial anti-smoking warnings on cigarette packages nationally, acts as a call for governments to take stronger action, according ASH Australia CEO Anne Jones.

"While it's encouraging to see that many Australians are supportive of proposed tobacco control policies, the findings make it clear that people may not know as much as some think they do about the links between smoking and cancer, despite strong medical evidence," said Ms Jones.



For example, the survey reveals that around a quarter of smokers believe that just 20 percent of smokers are shortening their lives where the real figure is closer to one-in-two<sup>1</sup>.

Furthermore, only two in five Australians correctly identify that there is no health benefit in smoking 'light' or 'mild' cigarettes.

"We're doing a good job of educating people about the dangers of smoking but we could do a whole lot better," Ms Jones said.

According to ASH Australia, nicotine is a psychoactive drug which causes chemical or biological changes in the brain. Although the psychoactive effect of nicotine is less dramatic than that of other drugs, such as heroin or cocaine, the strength of the addiction can be as powerful.

"The good news is that the benefits of quitting are immense. Within a year of being smoke-free, your risk of dying from heart disease has halved. Within 10 years, your risk of lung cancer is more than halved and continues to decline over time," Ms Jones said.

For free assistance with stopping smoking, contact the QUIT line on **13-QUIT** or **137-848**.

To assist with educating the public about smoking, ASH Australia has collaborated with Pfizer Australia to produce this month's edition of the Pfizer Australia Health Report. Filled with useful information, free copies can be requested by phoning **1800 675 229** or by visiting [www.healthreport.com.au](http://www.healthreport.com.au) where people can also sign-up for email alerts of future editions.

The findings on Australian perceptions of smoking are based on responses from 1340 Australians aged 18 years and over. The research was conducted in December 2004 by independent consultants Stollznow Research.

Pfizer Australia is the nation's leading research-based health care company, investing over \$A42m in local research and development annually. It discovers, develops, manufactures and markets innovative medical treatments for both humans and animals. For more information, visit [www.pfizer.com.au](http://www.pfizer.com.au).

# # #

**NB: INTERVIEWS WITH EXPERTS ARE AVAILABLE.**

For more information please contact Hausmann Communications:  
Amy McIntosh on (02) 8353 5718 or 0404 489 917

---

<sup>1</sup>Doll et al (2004) at <http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/328/7455/1519>