

MEDIA RELEASE**Date:** Wednesday 25 February, 2015**The numbers are in: 1.8m Australian smokers will die from their habit**

The first large-scale, direct evidence on smoking and mortality in Australia shows up to 1.8 million of our 2.7 million smokers will die from their habit if they continue to smoke.

The research, published today in the international journal *BMC Medicine*, is an important reminder that the war on tobacco is not yet won, and our world-leading efforts in tobacco control must go on.

"Australia can be proud of its remarkable success in cutting population smoking to just 13% but even with this world-leading result, 2.7 million of us still smoke," said Professor Emily Banks, Scientific Director of the Sax Institute's 45 and Up Study and an Australian National University researcher.

"Our findings show that up to two in every three of these smokers can be expected to die from their habit if they don't quit and this highlights the importance of staying the course on tobacco control."

The research is the result of a four-year analysis of health outcomes from more than 200,000 people from the general population participating in the Sax Institute's 45 and Up Study.

"These findings are a huge wake-up call for Australia." Professor Banks said. "We knew smoking was bad but we now have direct evidence from Australia that shows it is worse than previously thought. Even 10 cigarettes a day will double your risk of dying prematurely."

The research was supported by the National Heart Foundation in collaboration with major 45 and Up Study partner Cancer Council NSW and conducted by a national and international team.

The NSW Heart Foundation's CEO, Kerry Doyle, said the Government was on the right path in driving down smoking rates through initiatives like tax increases and plain packaging.

"Higher tobacco prices have been shown to be the most effective intervention available to governments to reduce demand for tobacco. With smoking being a major cause of cardiovascular disease, including heart attack, stroke and peripheral vascular disease the more deterrents people have between them and smoking, the better," Ms Doyle said.

Scott Walsberger, Tobacco Control Manager at Cancer Council NSW, said the research results highlighted an important message for smokers: "It's never too late to quit – no matter what your age, or how much you smoke".

"People often underestimate the urgency for quitting and many are not aware of how damaging even light smoking is for cancer and other preventable illnesses," he said. "Smokers can call the *Quitline* on 13 78 48, visit www.icanquit.com.au or speak to their GP or medical practitioner about how they can stop smoking before it's too late."

Other key findings:

- Compared with non-smokers, smokers will die an estimated 10 years earlier
- Compared with non-smokers, smoking just 10 cigarettes a day doubles the risk of dying prematurely and smoking a pack a day increases the risk four- to five-fold

Media contacts:

Kellie Bisset **M:** 0434 614 578 **T:** 02 9188 9548 **E:** Kellie.Bisset@saxinstitute.org.au

Gina Murphy **M:** 0413 889 283 **T:** 02-9334 1428 **E:** Ginam@nswcc.org.au

Julia Power **M:** 0478 313 656 **T:** 02 9219 2426 **E:** Julia.Power@heartfoundation.org.au

Paper available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1186/s12916-015-0281-z>

45 and Up Study partners:

