



Media Release

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20+ health and community orgs sign on to ‘virtually eliminate’ smoking

More than 20 leading health and community groups have united to commit to reducing Victoria’s daily smoking rate and they’re urging other organisations including all political parties to get on board.

Led by Quit Victoria, 24 organisations including the Australian Medical Association, Heart Foundation, the Stroke Foundation, Thorne Harbour Health (formerly the Victorian AIDS Council), Mental Health Victoria and the Australian Dental Association are using the *Target 2025 – Countdown to a tobacco-free Victoria* vision statement to demonstrate why urgent action is needed.

Quit Victoria Director Dr Sarah White said the organisations believed it was possible to reach the ambitious goal of only 5% of Victorians smoking daily.

“We’re at 13.7% now and on track to hit 10% by 2025 – but getting to 5% would produce significant benefits,” Dr White said.

“Reaching 5% by 2025 would save the Victorian economy an estimated \$4.042 billion in total tangible costs over the next seven years.

“It would also save lives. As it stands, 450,000 of the 730,000 Victorians who currently smoke are expected to die prematurely. Hundreds of thousands will be diagnosed with a debilitating smoking-related illness, such as blindness, stroke, cancer or peripheral vascular disease.”

Importantly, reaching a 5% daily smoking rate would also decrease some of the significant health and financial inequities experienced by some of our most vulnerable community members, with smoking remaining high among key groups such as the LGBTI community, people with a lived experience of mental illness, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Thorne Harbour Health (formerly the Victorian AIDS Council) Acting CEO Johann Ruth said smoking is a significant contributor to poor health and financial distress experienced by people in the LGBTI communities.

“The smoking rates in the LGBTI communities are as much as three times higher than those of the general population. Most LGBTI people are aware of the health impacts of smoking, but Victoria is lacking tailored campaigns and smoking cessation strategies to help them quit,” Ms Ruth said.

“We need to work with political parties, health organisations and LGBTI communities to work towards reducing the significant inequities experienced by some populations within LGBTI communities as a result of smoking.”

Heart Foundation CEO Kellie-Ann Jolly said the health benefits from a reduced smoking rate would be visible straight away.



“If the daily smoking rate reached 5%, the heart health of half a million Victorians would benefit,” Ms Jolly said.

“Within one day of quitting, a person’s heart rate slows down, their blood pressure drops slightly and oxygen levels in their blood rise. Within a year, they halve their risk of heart attack and stroke. In two to six years, their risk of developing heart disease is equal to that of a non-smoker.

“Quitting cigarettes is one of the best ways people can reduce their risk of heart disease and other chronic illnesses, while also protecting those around them from the risks of passive smoking.”

To achieve the 5% target set out in Target 2025, Victoria must eliminate the uptake of youth smoking and increase the number of adult smokers quitting successfully. **To do this, we must:**

1. Use TV-led public education campaigns proven to deter youth uptake and encourage and sustain adult efforts to quit
2. End remaining forms of advertising and promotion of tobacco products
3. Embed smoking cessation into routine healthcare in Victoria
4. Close remaining loopholes in smokefree legislation
5. Reduce the widespread availability and visibility of tobacco products.

“The 24 organisations behind *Target 2025* have signed up to demonstrate their commitment to reaching the ambitious but achievable goal of virtually eliminating daily smoking in Victoria,” Dr White said.

“We know what needs to be done to reduce the enormous burden tobacco is having on our state, but to make our goal a reality we need all Victorian political parties to also show their commitment.”

Target 2025 – Countdown to a tobacco-free Victoria is an evidence-based forecast of the benefits of achieving a 5% daily smoking rate by 2025.

The 24 organisations behind Target 2025 are: Quit Victoria, Australian Dental Association – Victoria, Australian Medical Association, Cancer Council Victoria, Centre for Adolescent Health, Deakin Health Economics, Diabetes Victoria, Gippsland Primary Health Network, Heart Foundation Victoria, Lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health Association, La Trobe University, Mental Health Victoria, Monash University, Odyssey House, The Public Health Association of Australia, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, Stroke Foundation, The Lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health Association, Thorne Harbour Health (formerly Victorian AIDS Council), Tobacco Free Portfolios, United Voice Victoria, Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, The Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority, the Victorian Network Smokefree Health Services and Your Fertility.

Quit Victoria is a partnership between VicHealth, the State Government of Victoria, Cancer Council Victoria and the Heart Foundation.