



The Hon Dr David Gillespie MP
Assistant Minister for Health
Member for Lyne

MEDIA RELEASE

10 June 2017

Barunga Festival: Don't Make Smokes Your Story

The *Don't Make Smokes Your Story* campaign is empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to quit smoking.

Federal Assistant Minister for Health, Dr David Gillespie, spoke at the Barunga Festival, about 70 kilometres from Katherine in the Northern Territory, to drive home the importance of giving up smoking tobacco.

“The facts are clear — tobacco use causes the greatest burden of disease, disability, injury and early death in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people,” Dr Gillespie said.

“We also know that smoking accounts for 23 per cent of the health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

“The impact on families, friends and the wider community is no less significant because watching someone suffer from a preventable smoking-related condition is simply heartbreaking.”

The Federal Coalition Government has allocated considerable resources for the *Don't Make Smokes Your Story* campaign and is getting results.

Seventy-five per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers surveyed in 2016 reported being aware of the campaign with 58 per cent of people taking some form of action to stop smoking.

“At the same time, our Government is also investing in the Tackling Indigenous Smoking program, to support local community approaches to prevent the uptake of smoking and promote smoking cessation among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“Being acutely aware of the impact smoking has on a persons health, having practiced medicine for over thirty years, I’m in Barunga to help encourage people to quit smoking so we can close the gap on health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people everywhere.”

The Barunga Festival is one of the most important and longest-running community festivals in regional Australia attracting around 4,000 people from Australia and around the world. The Festival features a program of music, sport, traditional arts and cultural activities over three days.

More information about the *Don't Make Smokes Your Story* can be found online at <https://campaigns.health.gov.au/>

For more information, contact the Minister's Office on (02) 6277 4960