



The Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP

**Minister for Aged Care
Minister for Indigenous Health
Member for Hasluck**

MEDIA RELEASE

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Indigenous All Stars game tackles Indigenous smoking

Tonight's NRL Indigenous All Stars game in Newcastle is helping spread the word to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians that a smoke-free life is better than scoring a try when it comes to better health and wellbeing.

"The All Stars game is a fantastic celebration of strength, health and achievement," said the Minister for Indigenous Health, Ken Wyatt AM, MP, who is attending the game in Newcastle.

"Taking up a sport is a great way to improve both physical and mental health."

The Federal Coalition Government is investing \$116.8 million in the Tackling Indigenous Smoking program, which aims to prevent the uptake of smoking and supports smoking cessation among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Mr Wyatt said: "The Government is committed to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and reducing Indigenous smoking rates plays a large role in achieving this.

"Although we have made some gains, smoking rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are still high. This program is creating momentum at the local level to address this issue."

The '*Don't Make Smokes Your Story*' campaign is another key component of the tackling smoking strategy. The campaign, which focuses on 18–40 year old smokers and recent quitters, has kicked a number of goals through the first phase of activity in May 2016.

The 2016 campaign evaluation showed nine per cent of people interviewed had quit as a result of seeing the campaign and a further 26 per cent intended to quit in the next month. There have also been more than 30,000 new users of the *My QuitBuddy* app.

Around 39 per cent of Indigenous Australians aged 15 years and over are daily smokers, which is nearly three times the rate for non-Indigenous Australians. Smoking is estimated to account for one-in-five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths.

Mr Wyatt said: “Governments, health organisations, individuals, families and communities need to work together to turn these statistics around. We can all play a part in encouraging smokers to quit and to stay smoke-free.”

There will be another phase of campaign activity in 2017 to build on the results to date.

For more information contact Randal Markey, Minister Wyatt’s office, 0417 318 620