



## THE HON CHRISTOPHER PYNE MP

### Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing

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#### **Smoking: a death sentence for teens**

About 45,000 Australian teenagers will start smoking in 2007 and about half of them will ultimately be killed by smoking-related diseases, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing, Christopher Pyne, warned today.

Mr Pyne was launching the Australian Government's new \$25 million National Tobacco Youth Campaign.

"Tobacco smoking is the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in Australia, and kills more than 19,000 Australians each year," he said.

"As about half the people who start smoking during adolescence will ultimately die of a smoking-related disease if they continue to smoke, it is critically important to convince young people not to take up smoking – or to quit if they are already smoking.

"The most recent national figures from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare show that the rate for Australians aged over 14 years who smoke daily has fallen from 19.5 per cent in 2001 to 17.4 per cent in 2004.

"This is among the lowest of any country in the world.

"Significantly, the downward trends correspond with periods of National Tobacco Campaign activity.

"But despite these excellent results, it is important not to become complacent.

"Smoking prevalence increases throughout adolescence, with 2.3 per cent of 12- to 15-year-olds smoking daily, compared with 16.9 per cent of 18- to 19-year-olds," he said.

Mr Pyne said the new campaign would discourage many young people from experimenting with cigarettes.

"The campaign will help strengthen some positive emerging trends," he said.

These trends were revealed in the results of the recently-released Australian Secondary Schools Alcohol and Drug Survey, which showed that:

- in 2005, 65 per cent of secondary students aged 12-17 had never smoked a cigarette, compared with 53 per cent in 2002.
- smoking rates among both 12 to 15-year-olds and 16 to 17-year-olds in 2005 were at the lowest levels recorded over the last two decades.

For more information on smoking and the Australian Government's National Tobacco Youth Campaign, see <http://australia.gov.au/quitnow> .

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