



## **THE HON CHRISTOPHER PYNE MP**

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

12 September 2005

CP053/05

#### **National smoking and pregnancy advisory group**

National initiatives to encourage pregnant women to stop smoking for the sake of their babies will be developed following the inaugural meeting this month of an expert advisory group.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing, Christopher Pyne, announced today that the National Advisory Group on Smoking and Pregnancy would hold its first meeting in Melbourne on 14 September.

In the 2005 Budget, the Australian Government committed \$4.3 million over three years to programs to help women to stop smoking during pregnancy, and to avoid taking up smoking again after giving birth. The advisory group will advise the government on the most effective ways to invest in this issue.

“Women who continue to smoke while they are pregnant are hurting their babies,” Mr Pyne said. “Chemicals from the smoke can cross the placenta and restrict the blood cells in the growing child. Smoking is linked to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, lower birth weights, congenital problems and miscarriage.

“The Australian Government is committed to reducing the rate of smoking among pregnant women and mothers, especially Indigenous women. We also want to see fewer women with children smoking, because of the effects of passive smoking on children.”

The Advisory Group brings expertise from diverse backgrounds. The chair will be Sue Knowles, a former Senator. Other members represent the Women’s Hospital Australasia, the Australian College of Midwives, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the Centre for Excellence in Indigenous Tobacco Control, the Institute of Health Research, and the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research.

Recommendations arising from the advisory group meeting will be considered by Mr Pyne for implementation as soon as practicable.

Details of the national advisory group members are attached.

**Media contact: Adam Howard 0400 414 833**

## **Background information of National Advisory Group members**

### **Dr Eleanor Long**

#### **The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists**

As Chief Executive Officer of The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, Dr Long is keen to give the support of the college in developing educational initiatives and smoking cessation programs that penetrate all sections of maternity care in our community, in both the public and private sectors.

The college developed a statement "Women and Smoking" in November 2003 and welcomes the opportunity to contribute to smoking cessation programs in the future.

### **Ms Sue Hendy, representative of the Australian College of Midwives Special Midwifery Project Officer**

During the last two years Ms Hendy has worked very closely with the NSW Health Tobacco Cessation Branch to provide the latest research, evidence and workshops to clinicians, as she believes smoking and pregnancy to be the most significant problem with preterm birth.

### **Ms Debbie Oag, representative of the Australian College of Midwives Smoke-free Pregnancy Officer**

Ms Oag is a midwife with experience in both the rural and metropolitan midwifery settings. She has completed a Bachelor of Nursing, Bachelor of Health Science (streamlining in Health Education and Health Promotion), and is currently enrolled in the Master of Public Health program. Since March 2004 she has been working for Quit SA on the Smoke-free Pregnancy Project. This project is a collaborative partnership between the Department of Health, Quit SA, Women's and Children's Hospital and Lyell McEwin Health Service.

Ms Oag feels her particular talents lay with implementation of the Smoke Free Pregnancy Project and overcoming the barriers that exist between the theory of smoking and pregnancy and the introduction of a new tool in an already stretched practical health care setting.

As part of Ms Oag's studies she spent one month in a remote Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory developing and implementing a community workshop to women on smoking and the health benefits of quitting.

### **Ms Karen Goodall, Deputy Chief Executive Officer Women's Hospitals Australasia and Children's Hospitals Australasia**

Ms Goodall is a registered nurse and midwife with post graduate qualifications in child health and paediatrics. She is currently undertaking a Master of Health Administration.

Ms Goodall has worked in healthcare since she graduated as a registered nurse in 1987 in the UK and has held various positions within women's and children's health since this time, including management, education and clinical.

She has been in her current position as Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Women's Hospitals Australasia (WHA) and Children's Hospitals Australasia for two years. Her

responsibilities include managing WHA's clinical forum programs. The focus of the WHA program in 2004 was smoking and pregnancy during which time Ms Goodall worked with an expert reference group comprised of WHA member hospital representatives and National Expert Advisory Committee on Tobacco representatives. Together they developed and held a clinical forum on smoking and pregnancy in March 2004. Since this time Ms Goodall has been responsible for progressing the outcomes of the forum and developing the WHA Position Statement with respect to smoking in pregnancy. This has included visiting areas undertaking projects aimed at smoking cessation during pregnancy, liaising with the National Perinatal Statistics Unit on the development of a minimum data set and following the progress of the development of clinical practice guidelines in this area.

**Ms Viki Briggs, Manager  
Centre for Excellence in Indigenous Tobacco Control**

Ms Briggs is currently the Manager of the Centre for Excellence in Indigenous Tobacco Control and was previously the Aboriginal Program Coordinator at the Quit Campaign, Cancer Council of Victoria for 11 years. She also sits on a number of committees relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tobacco Control and Health. She has a BA (teaching), Graduate Diploma in Indigenous Health Promotion and is currently studying for a Master of Public Health. This is Ms Briggs's 20th year working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.

**Dr Sandra Eades, Senior Research Fellow  
Institute of Health Research**

Dr Eades is currently undertaking a National Health and Medical Research Council funded project concerning smoking during pregnancy among Indigenous women in Queensland.

**Ms Renee Bittoun, Director  
Smokers Clinics, SW Sydney Area Health Service**

Ms Bittoun is head of the Smoking Cessation Unit, Woolcock Institute of Medical Research and a clinical associate at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Sydney. Ms Bittoun originally worked as a physiologist working on respiratory disease, focusing on emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

**Ms Susan Knowles**

Ms Susan Knowles was a Liberal Senator representing Western Australia. Ms Knowles has considerable experience in Government, having spent more than 20 years in the Australian Senate. She served on various Committees during that time, and is a held a variety of Parliamentary positions.

Ms Knowles brings to the position of Chair a commitment to better health outcomes.