



Centre for Excellence in
Indigenous Tobacco Control

CEITC



Cooperative Research Centre for
Aboriginal Health

Media Release

ROUNDTABLE TARGETS INDIGENOUS SMOKING

May 22 2008

Two leading Indigenous health research bodies say a National Tobacco Control Roundtable taking place tomorrow in Brisbane will for the first time set a clear agenda for reducing the high rates of smoking among Indigenous Australians.

Research has shown that cutting the prevalence of Indigenous smoking would have a major impact on mortality rates within Australia's Indigenous population, whose life expectancy on average is 17 years less than for non-Indigenous Australians.

The Roundtable comes just two months after the Rudd Government's announcement that it will spend \$14.5 million to fund initiatives to curb Indigenous smoking rates. The forum will bring together researchers, health promoters and educators, government health agencies and Indigenous community representatives to prioritise the research agenda and establish a working group to drive change.

Viki Briggs of the Centre for Excellence in Indigenous Tobacco Control (CEITC), which together with the CRC for Aboriginal Health (CRCAH) is hosting the Roundtable, said the scale of the problem was shown by the fact that more than half of all Indigenous adults smoked on a daily basis compared with just 17% of the broader Australian adult population.

"Of the 17-year life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, smoking contributes 17% of that or roughly three years," Ms Briggs said.

"While I expect the Roundtable to target sustained and ongoing reductions in smoking rates over the long term, anything we can do to cut prevalence rates will also have a positive short-term impact on Indigenous health by bringing down cardiovascular disease and cancer rates."

The CRCAH's Mick Gooda said it was vital that anti-smoking initiatives targeting Aboriginal people were based on firm evidence.

"There are already a few tobacco control programs directed at Aboriginal people but we don't know whether or not these are effective," he said.

"With the right evidence base to show what works and appropriate training for an Indigenous tobacco-control related workforce, we'll be able to start making real inroads into this problem."

Ms Briggs welcomed the Rudd Government's commitment to closing the life expectancy gap, and said there were measures that could be put in place as a matter of urgency.

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“We need regionalised, dedicated Indigenous tobacco control workers around the country to work in partnership with Aboriginal medical services, government agencies and other non-government health organisations,” she said.

“Working towards lowering smoking prevalence rates will go a long way towards reducing the gap.”

The National Tobacco Control Roundtable takes place tomorrow (Friday 23 May) at:

Mercure Hotel, 85-87 North Quay, Brisbane 9am – 4pm

For more information and interviews, call:

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To read a joint CEITC\CRCAH Policy Brief on Indigenous smoking:

www.crcah.org.au/publications

www.ceitc.org.au/ceitc_publications