



## MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 13 May 2004

### Lady Killer, why risk it? campaign launched

The Cancer Institute NSW and NSW Health have joined forces to launch a campaign targeting women smokers. The campaign is designed to heighten women's awareness of the additional health risks (reduced fertility, menstrual problems, difficulties with pregnancy and childbirth) they face compared with men.<sup>1 2</sup>

The **Lady Killer - why risk it?** campaign is timely as female smoking rates in Australia are declining at a rate more slowly than male smoking rates.<sup>3</sup> Over 18 per cent of Australian women over 14 years are daily smokers<sup>4</sup> and 6,000 Australian women die each year as a result of smoking related illness.<sup>5</sup> Smoking is Australia's number one preventable killer.<sup>6</sup>

According to CEO of the Cancer Institute NSW, Professor Jim Bishop, the groundwork has been done in communicating anti smoking messages to the general public but now we must focus our attention on targeting messages to smokers – in this instance women smokers.

"We believe there is great urgency to highlight to women the personal consequences of their smoking. This campaign is designed to 'strike a chord' with women, especially women between the ages of 16 - 34 years as they have the highest rates of daily smoking in NSW," Professor Bishop said.

The **Lady Killer - why risk it?** awareness campaign is supported with three, thirty-second powerful, true-life television advertisements. The ads feature "Jenny", a 42-year-old woman who has terminal lung cancer as a result of smoking. Jenny began smoking when she was 14 years old and continued to smoking on and off until she was 37. She went to her doctor with shoulder pain and after further investigations was found to have lung cancer. Her message to women who smoke is simple. "Quit now – don't wait for a warning sign...you might not get one."

"Jenny's story unfortunately is not unique. Tobacco smoking has frightening consequences for anyone who smokes," Professor Bishop said. "We hope the take out message from this campaign for any women who smokes is to ring the Quitline for information and strategies on how they can quit,"

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<sup>1</sup> US Department of Health and Human Services 2001, *Women and Smoking: A Report of the Surgeon General*, Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, Washington.

<sup>2</sup> Walsh, R., Lowe, J. & Hopkins, P. 2001, 'Quitting smoking in pregnancy', *Medical Journal of Australia*, vol. 175, pp. 320-23.

<sup>3</sup> Public Health Division. The health of the people of New South Wales Report of the Chief Health Officer 2002. Sydney NSW Department of Health 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2002, *Australia's Health 2002*, AIHW, Canberra.

<sup>5</sup> Ridolfo, B. & Stevenson, C. 2001, *The Quantification of Drug-Caused Mortality and Morbidity in Australia*, 1998, AIHW (Drug Statistics Series no. 7), Canberra.

<sup>6</sup> Miller, M. & Draper, G. 2001, *Statistics on Drug Use in Australia 2000*. AIHW Cat. No. PHE 30, AIHW (Drug and Statistics Series no. 8), Canberra

St Vincent's Hospital lung cancer patient, Carolyn Miller knows only too well the harsh reality of smoking and encourages women to learn from her and quit smoking today.

"I only wish sophisticated anti-smoking campaigns such as *Lady Killer* were around when I was young. At that time smoking was promoted as a glamorous thing to do. That image is a lie. The only thing that is really true about smoking is that it makes you ill, it makes you addicted and it has far reaching effects on your family," Mrs Miller said.

"This campaign could be called the *Silent Lady Killer* as, like Jenny in the ad, I had no signs or symptoms of lung cancer before I was diagnosed," said Mrs Miller. "My message to female smokers couldn't be more clear, quit before you have a chance to regret you never did," said 52-year-old Mrs Miller.

Elayne Mitchell, Senior Tobacco Policy Analyst at NSW Health urges women to call the Quitline for strategies on how to quit. She acknowledges that quitting is difficult and that it may take several attempts before a person is a successful. But she says, counsellors at the Quitline can use your past attempts to quit to develop a more tailored quitting strategy for you.

The *Lady Killer* television commercial will run on television from May 13. A comprehensive awareness campaign targeting women, pharmacists and GPs has been launched. Healthcare professionals and community health centers have been sent 'Lady Killer' posters and are encouraged to display them in public places to increase the impact of the campaign.

"This is the first of many initiatives the Cancer Institute NSW and NSW Health will collaboratively embark upon to ensure the goal in NSW Cancer Plan of reducing the incidence of smoking by 1 per cent each year is met," Professor Bishop said.

For information about quitting smoking please call the **Quitline on 131 848** or go to NSW Health website [www.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au) Cancer Institute website [www.cancerinstitute.org.au](http://www.cancerinstitute.org.au).

## QUIT TIPS

If you've decided to stop smoking try the following suggestions to increase your chances of quitting for life:

1. Give one of the trained counselors a call at the **Quitline 131 848**, it's just the cost of a local call from anywhere in Australia.
2. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist and together plan a quitting strategy. This may include using Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT).
3. If your partner, friend or a family member smokes, encourage them to quit with you so you have a 'quitting buddy'
4. Make your car and house 'smoke free' zones-it will help reduce temptation.