



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Frank Sartor MP

Minister for Climate Change and the Environment
Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer)

20 December 2009

YOUR SMOKING IS NOT JUST ABOUT YOU – NEW AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

An emotive new anti-smoking campaign by the Cancer Institute NSW will ask every parent who smokes to kick the habit this holiday season.

Minister Assisting on Health (Cancer) Frank Sartor said the \$850,000 *What's Worse?* campaign provided a wake-up call with the message that cancer affects the whole family, not just the smoker.

“The campaign asks – what’s worse about your smoking, is it hearing from a doctor that you have cancer or is it the moment you tell your kids?” Minister Sartor said.

In the television commercial developed by the Department of Health UK, *What's Worse*, a 35 year old mother of two young daughters, hears the devastating news from her doctor that she has lung cancer. We then enter her living room with her daughters, and ask:

“what could be worse than hearing this from your doctor? ... Saying it to your children.”

“The best present parents can give their family this Christmas is improved health, by quitting,” Mr Sartor said.

“While the results of the NSW Government’s anti-smoking campaigns are encouraging, there are still around 950,000 smokers in NSW and smoking is still the biggest cause of cancer.

“One in two lifetime smokers will die from their habit; and a third of those deaths will occur in middle age. This is a future few parents would wish for their children.

“Lung cancer causes more deaths in NSW than any other cancer and we now know that lung cancer has overtaken breast cancer as the leading cause of cancer death in women,” Mr Sartor said.

Kathy Reeves, an ex-smoker from Sydney, knows too well the anguish of a parent dying of lung disease. When Kathy’s mother passed away at age 56, despite having not smoked, it was a reality check for the smoker.

“I came to the realisation that I could not change my mother dying, but there were factors in my life that were in my control, so I slowly set about changing them. Smoking was the first to go,” Ms Reeves said.

Media contact: Lisa Mackay-Sim 9228 3606/ 0447 868 608

Online testing of *What's Worse* by the Cancer Institute NSW has found Ms Reeves is not alone. Seven in ten people surveyed said the campaign made them stop and think and almost eight in ten said the commercial was believable.

Tobacco – Key Facts

- One in two lifetime smokers will die from their habit – with a third of those deaths occurring in middle age.
- Smoking kills 15,500 Australians each year – more than the combined total killed by car accidents, breast cancer, AIDS, drowning, heroin overdose, falls, homicide and suicide.
- Smoking is by far the leading cause of lung cancer, with 4 out of 5 lung cancers linked to tobacco.
- NSW Health spends more than \$250 million a year treating tobacco-related illness – that's the equivalent of 3000 full-time nurses or 50,000 elective surgery procedures.
- The indirect cost of smoking to the NSW economy, including lost productivity and wages, has been estimated at \$6.6 billion per year.