



A healthy  
workplace  
is good for  
business

## FACT SHEET I – HEALTH EFFECTS OF SMOKING

Tobacco smoking costs Australia over \$30 billion a year in health, business and social costs. The costs to business alone are over \$5.7 billion.<sup>1</sup> Smoking is the single greatest cause of preventable death in the world.<sup>2</sup>

In 2011-2012, the rate of smoking amongst Tasmanian adults was 21.7%, which is above the national average of 18%. Smoking rates were higher amongst males (25.8%) compared to females (17.9%).<sup>3</sup>

The best thing smokers can do for their health is to quit smoking.

### Health effects for smokers

The health effects of cigarette smoke have been well researched for several decades. Smokers have more health issues and a lower life expectancy than the general population. Smoking causes a range of serious health problems, including cancer, heart disease, stroke, asthma, emphysema, vascular disease and damage to most body organs.

Smokers' health problems can impact on their work performance and affect productivity through more frequent sickness-related absences and multiple 'smoke breaks' while at work.<sup>4</sup>

Despite common thinking that smoking is a stress reliever, research has found that it actually increases psychological distress while providing no medicinal benefits.<sup>5</sup>





### Health effects for non-smokers

Non-smokers can be affected by inhaling environmental tobacco smoke released from a burning cigarette or smoke that is exhaled by a smoker.

Environmental tobacco smoke is the mixture of chemicals and toxins released whenever someone smokes a cigarette. Many of the 4,000+ chemicals in tobacco smoke are poisonous, and at least 69 are known cancer-causing agents.<sup>6</sup> 'Passive smoking' occurs when non-smokers inhale environmental tobacco smoke causing non-smokers to breathe the same dangerous substances as smokers.

Some of the immediate effects of passive smoking are eye irritation, headache, cough and sore throat.<sup>7,8,9</sup> Passive smoking can also lead to more serious health issues, similar to those of smokers, including lung cancer, heart disease and respiratory problems.<sup>7,8,9</sup> There are health risks from being exposed to environmental tobacco smoke in both indoor and outdoor areas.

A report by the World Health Organisation has concluded that there is no safe level of exposure to environmental tobacco smoke.<sup>10</sup>

### References

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