

**Government of Western Australia
Media Statement**

The Hon. Jim McGinty MLA

Attorney General; Minister for Health; Electoral Affairs

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Portfolio: Health

WA teenagers turn away from smoking

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A new report released today by Health Minister Jim McGinty shows a dramatic drop in the number of WA teenagers smoking.

Mr McGinty said smoking had a significant impact on the health budget, with smoking-related health problems costing the health system \$1million a week.

The report shows the number of 12 to 17-year-old smokers has fallen from 17 per cent to 10 per cent in three years.

In a survey of 3,315 school students, the report found a drop in smoking across the age group, with the biggest fall seen in 12 to 15-year-olds where smoking nearly halved from 15 to eight per cent.

The only recorded increase occurred in 17-year-old females, where smokers rose from 18 per cent to 23 per cent. In contrast, smoking among males of the same age fell by 10 per cent.

Mr McGinty said the results were the most significant since the three-yearly survey began in 1984 and demonstrated the success of WA anti-tobacco campaigning.

"The results show the value of anti-smoking campaigns and that initiatives targeting teenagers are working," he said.

"They show school-based smoking prevention and cessation programs, national and State-based campaigning and cigarette pricing policy, as well as tobacco control legislation, are all having an impact.

"This bodes well for the future, as we know the percentage of teenagers smoking today is a strong indicator of continued smoking into adulthood.

"Smoking addiction translates into a significant burden on the State; smoking-related illnesses and death currently cost our health system more than \$1million a week."

Mr McGinty said he was concerned there were still 15,500 WA school children smoking.

"The sooner young people stop smoking, the less cost there is to their health and the significant burden to taxpayers of hospital care is reduced," he said.

The smoking results are from the 2002 Australian School Students Alcohol and Drug Survey and are the seventh in a series of national surveys on school student drug use behaviour.

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