



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **the Premier and Cabinet**

## **Minister for Health**

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### **Media Statement**

16/9/09

#### **New survey shows historic lows in the number of WA school children smoking.**

New survey results released today showed that, for the first time in the survey's history, less than five per cent of Western Australian 12 to 17 year-olds were now regular smokers.

The 2008 Australian School Students Alcohol and Drug (ASSAD) survey carried out for the Department of Health also showed that the proportion of students who have never smoked had been dramatically turned around. In 2008, almost 75 per cent of 12 to 17 year-olds had never smoked, compared with almost 32 per cent in 1984.

Health Minister Kim Hames said the impressive results showed the success of sustained anti-tobacco campaigning over 25 years.

"Only a few years ago nobody would have believed that regular smoking would be under five per cent in schoolchildren and under 15 per cent in adults, and that there would be legislation banning point-of-sale displays and smoking around children in cars," Dr Hames said.

"WA already has some of the lowest smoking rates in the country for adults and children and these results tell us that young people are getting the message.

"In 2008, only 4.8 per cent of 12 to 17 year-olds had smoked in the past week, down from 6.1 per cent in 2005, and 17.5 per cent in 1984. WA had the lowest smoking rates nationally among schoolchildren in 2005 and there can be little doubt that we continue to lead the nation in results.

"On the basis of these trends, approximately 40,000 deaths caused by smoking will be prevented over the next 40 years."

The Minister said WA teenagers had benefited from the comprehensive tobacco campaigns and programs run over many years in this State by government and health agencies - such as Quit and Smarter than Smoking.

"The younger a person starts smoking, the more likely it is that they will become long-term smokers, so these results mean a healthier future for today's teenagers," he said.

The survey showed a reduction in smoking across the majority of age groups with the biggest drop since 2005 seen in 16 year-olds, where the proportion reporting smoking in the past week decreased from 9.9 to 6.7 per cent.

In 2008, females were more likely to have smoked within the past week (5.1 per cent) or year (16.8 per cent) than males (4.6 and 14.9 per cent respectively), however, significantly fewer females had smoked in the past week or month compared to the 2005 survey.

Dr Hames said although fewer teenagers were smoking there was still work to be done, as smoking remained our largest preventable cause of death and disease.

“We will continue with the message that every cigarette is doing damage and we will continue with our campaigns to reduce smoking in adults and children, with a special focus on disadvantaged groups,” he said.

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