

# NEWS RELEASE

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## WILL GRAPHIC PACK WARNINGS CHANGE SMOKERS' MINDS?

As smokers prepare for new graphic health warnings on their cigarette packs from 1 March, the question remains – will graphic health warnings on packs help them to quit?

The answer, according to a study from Canada, which introduced graphic health warnings in 2001, is yes.

A 2003 Canadian study that assessed the impact of the Canadian graphic cigarette pack warnings on adult smokers revealed that virtually all smokers (91 per cent) reported having read the warning labels. Smokers who had read, thought about, and discussed the new labels were more likely to have quit, made a quit attempt, or reduced their smoking three months later.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Geoffrey Fong, one of the authors of the study, said that the study confirmed the impact of health warnings. "Graphic health warnings increase smokers' thoughts about the health risks of smoking, and thinking about those risks are associated with future quit attempts," said Professor Fong.

According to Professor Jim Bishop, Chief Executive Officer of the Cancer Institute NSW, these results are encouraging for Australia. "The positive results from Canada's introduction of graphic health warnings on cigarette packs bodes well for Australia. The introduction of graphic health warnings in Australia will play a vital role in educating people about the health affects of smoking and in prompting people to quit smoking.

"Graphic health warnings on cigarette packs are especially important, considering the low impact of the current text warnings on packs. Our research shows that most smokers can't recall the current warnings on cigarette packs. According to the Cancer Institute NSW's 2005 Smoking and Health Survey, only 15 per cent of respondents recalled the current pack warning that 'smoking is addictive' and just 31 per cent recalled the pack warning that 'smoking causes lung cancer'.

"The introduction of graphic health warnings on cigarette packs is a key step in educating smokers about the health effects of their habit, and in prompting them to quit smoking," said Professor Bishop.

### **If you would like assistance to quit smoking call the Quitline 13 7848.**

The Cancer Institute NSW is Australia's first state-wide government cancer control agency. It aims to promote the best in prevention, early detection, treatment, research and information, and improve the fight against cancer by: increasing the survival rate; reducing the incidence; improving the quality of life for patients and their carers and acting as a source of expertise on cancer control. For more information on the Cancer Institute NSW, visit [www.cancerinstitute.org.au](http://www.cancerinstitute.org.au)

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<sup>1</sup>.Hammond, D., Fong, G.T., McDonald, P.W., Cameron, R., & Brown, K.S. (2003). The impact of the graphic Canadian warning labels on adult smoking behaviour. *Tobacco Control*, 13, 391-395.