

Media Release - 20 May 2007

Smoking contributes to up to a third of strokes in NSW

Shocking figures on the link between smoking and stroke have been released today with a report estimating that smoking may contribute to up to one in three strokes in NSW.

The report commissioned by the NSW Cancer Institute states that if smokers give up they halve their risk of stroke.

The figures were released at the launch of a new public health campaign highlighting the link between smoking and stroke.

The National Stroke Foundation CEO, Dr Erin Lalor called the results alarming and said they showed the need for greater awareness of how people can reduce their risk of stroke.

"Too many people are having strokes that could be avoided. One of the best ways to reduce your risk of stroke is to quit smoking."

The advertising campaign highlights the impact strokes can have on the whole family.

"Stroke is the second highest killer and a leading cause of severe disability as demonstrated in the ad," Dr Lalor said.

"It is not just the stroke survivor that is affected but the whole family.

"Any reductions in the number of people who smoke will benefit the community and cut down the number of strokes. A one percent reduction in smoking prevalence would result in potential cost offsets of \$5.5 million," she said.

The National Stroke Foundation says that acting **FAST** when seeing the signs of stroke was vital, as the faster a patient gets diagnosed and treated, the greater the chance of reducing damage to the brain.

FAST is a simple test for stroke. **FAST** stands for **F**acial weakness, **A**rm weakness, **S**peech difficulty, **T**ime to act. Using the **FAST** test involves asking three simple questions:

- **F**ace – Can the person smile, has their mouth or eyes drooped?
- **A**rms – Can the person raise both arms?
- **S**peech – Can the person speak clearly and understand what you say?
- **T**ime – Act **FAST** and call 000.

Dr Erin Lalor is available for interviews on 0418 955 996

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