



## Quit 'Parents' campaign 2001

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## Abstract

### Objective

To measure Victorian and South Australian parents' response to the National Tobacco Campaign's 'Parents' campaign.

### Design

Telephone survey of a random sample of 300 parents in Victoria who smoke, conducted in November 2001, and 121 parents in South Australia who smoke, conducted in October 2001.

### Results

Most parents who smoke agree that parents' smoking can affect their children (79% in Victoria and 69% in South Australia). When asked how this could happen, common responses were that it could increase the likelihood that their children would smoke, or the possibility that their children might be affected emotionally. Negative consequences for children were also mentioned when parents were asked about the worst things associated with getting a serious lung disease. The reaction to the advertisement was very positive, with more than 80% saying it was thought-provoking and more than 90% saying it was believable. More than one-third of parents said that the advertisement made them more likely to quit.

### Conclusions

The campaign accurately identified parents as a group of smokers concerned about the effects of their smoking on their children. Respondents' frequent unprompted responses about the effects of their smoking on their children and their positive response to the advertisement indicate that the campaign may have been successful in encouraging quitting among these smokers.

## Introduction

In 2001, Victoria and South Australia produced new advertising material, with a focus on parents, for a nationally available media campaign. This campaign followed the successful National Tobacco Campaign (1997–2000) (Hassard 2000) and was timed to continue the momentum of previous campaigns, but provide a new direction. The new campaign shifted focus from 'what every cigarette does to you' to 'the influence your smoking has on others – especially the ones that you love'.

The motivational strategy was to promote cessation through individual and social responsibility. Central to the process of individual change that underpinned the media campaign was the placement of cessation on the personal agenda of the smoker. This may come about as a result of new insights about smoking and a reassessment of the importance and relevance of quitting smoking. It may also be reinforced by reminders or prompts to quit smoking.

The primary objective of the campaign was to increase the likelihood that current smokers – particularly parents – would attempt to quit. A secondary objective was for children to encourage and support parents who smoke to quit. The 'Parents' campaign featured a 30-second television commercial, depicting a young girl visiting her father in hospital, along with her mother and younger brother. The father is suffering from lung cancer, appears very unwell and is attached to breathing apparatus. The girl tells her father a funny story, then she laughs and ends with, 'It was so funny, Dad, you should have been there'. The family pauses as the reality of what she has said sinks in. The final frame is black and features the slogan 'How will your smoking affect your life?' and the Quitline number. A shorter, 15-second version was also developed. The television commercial went to air in Victoria, South Australia and Queensland in August 2001.

## Method

Data from the 2001 Victorian annual population survey were used for the evaluation of the campaign (see Chapter 1 in this volume for details). A large market research company is commissioned to interview a representative sample of 2000 Victorians by telephone each year. The questions, designed by the Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer, are asked in an eight-minute interview conducted on weekends and weeknights during November.

Parents of children aged less than 18 years, who reported smoking daily or at least weekly (AIHW 1999), were selected for analysis and comprised 151 of

all respondents. To increase the sample size for this analysis, an additional random sample was contacted during the same period and 149 parents who smoked were interviewed using the same questions related to the campaign.

A similar survey of 1908 people aged 18 years and over was conducted in South Australia in October 2001 using exactly the same questions. There was no boost sample for the South Australian data. Overall, 121 respondents were classified as smoking parents and were included in the analyses. It is noteworthy that a year prior to the launch of the 'Parents' campaign in South Australia, a local campaign was launched, encouraging parents to ban smoking in their homes and cars in order to reduce their children's exposure to passive smoking. This campaign showed very high recall shortly after its launch, and has had regular periods of airtime, including community service announcements, since its launch (Miller 2002). It is possible that exposure to this campaign may have affected some of the responses given by respondents in the South Australian survey.

### *Statistical analysis*

In this report, details of statistical tests of significance are not usually included in the text. Where relationships between variables are reported, the probability level of significance was less than 0.05, indicating less than a 5 in 100 probability that the effect was caused by chance, and where appropriate, measures of association are reported.

### **Results**

Respondents were asked if, during the last six months, they had learned anything new about the effects of smoking cigarettes, for smokers or other people in their families. They were then asked what they had learnt (see Table 1). The responses to this question were similar for Victoria and South Australia, although more South Australian respondents reported having learned something new.

Respondents were asked a series of questions about the effects that a parent's smoking might have on their children. They were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement that parents' smoking can harm their children's lives, other than their health directly. In Victoria, four of five respondents (79%) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement (see Table 2). A similar proportion was found in South Australia (69%).

Respondents were then asked a series of open-ended questions. They were asked 'If you were to continue smoking in the long-term, how do you think

that would affect your children?' The most common response (see Table 3) from Victorian parents was that their children would be more likely to smoke (23%). This was not the most common response from South Australian parents: 'It would affect children emotionally' (20%) was the most common, and this was significantly higher than that found in Victoria (10%). In addition, Victorians were more likely than South Australians to say they did not know.

**Table 1** *During the past six months, have you learned anything new about the effects of smoking cigarettes, for smokers or other people in their family?*

Response	Vic (n=287) %	SA (n=121) %
No	86	73
Health effect	8	11
Passive smoking affects children's health	3	7
If you smoke around your kids, they smoke too	0	3
If parents smoke, children more likely to smoke	0	1
Smoking affects the family/children if smoker gets sick or dies	0.3	2
Don't know/Other	4	7

*Respondents were prompted for responses. Multiple responses were possible, thus total may not add to 100%.*

**Table 2** *A parent's smoking can harm their children's lives: do you agree or disagree?*

Response	Vic (n=287) %	SA (n=121) %
Strongly agree	41	34
Agree	38	36
Neither agree nor disagree	4	3
Disagree	12	18
Strongly disagree	4	4
Don't know/can't say	2	6

*Due to rounding not all columns sum to 100.*

The respondents were asked 'If you were to quit smoking permanently, how do you think that would affect your children?'. The most common response for both Victorian (56%) and South Australian (35%) parents was that 'They would be happy/proud/relieved' (see Table 4). Compared to Victorians, South Australians were more likely to say, 'It would be better for the children's health' or 'I would be healthier and able to do more with them/wouldn't be a burden when older'. South Australians were also more likely to report 'no effect'.

**Table 3** *If you were to continue smoking in the long term, how do you think that would affect your children?*

Response	Vic (n=287) %	SA (n=121) %
May be more likely to smoke	23	13
The smoking may affect their health	11	5
It would affect children emotionally	10	20
Dying early would affect them	10	13
Not able to care for them or do things with them	4.5	8
They may have to care for me	1	5
They might be less likely to smoke	9	4
There would be less money for them	0	4
No effect	23	24
Other	1	3
Don't know	15	3

*Respondents were prompted for responses. Multiple responses were possible, thus total may not add to 100%.*

**Table 4** *If you were to quit smoking permanently, how do you think it would affect your children?*

Response	Vic (n=287) %	SA (n=121) %
They would be happy/proud/relieved	56	35
It would be better for the children's health	11	16
They would be less likely to smoke	8	6
There would be more money to spend on them	7	8
I would be healthier and able to do more with them/ wouldn't be a burden when older	6	13
I would live longer	2	0
No effect	8	20
Other	16	4
Don't know	14	0

*Respondents were prompted for responses. Multiple responses were possible, thus total may not add to 100%.*

Respondents were asked if anyone at their house had been trying to get them to quit smoking in the last six months and, if so, their relationship with this person. The majority of respondents said that someone in their household was trying to get them to quit. Most often these were children or partner/spouse (see Table 5). In South Australia, 'partner' was reported more often than in Victoria and 'children' was reported less often. However, these differences were not statistically significant.

**Table 5** *During the past six months, has anyone at your house been trying to get you to quit smoking? What is that person's relationship to you?*

Response	Vic (n=287) %	SA (n=121) %
No	38	50
Yes, children	41	34
Yes, parent	1	3
Yes, sibling	0	0
Yes, partner/spouse	17	26
Yes, other	2	3

*Respondents were prompted for responses. Multiple responses were possible, thus total may not add to 100%.*

Respondents were asked 'If you were to get a serious lung disease from your smoking, what would be the three worst things associated with that?'. 'Dying' and 'pain, suffering, the illness itself' were common responses for both Victoria and South Australia (see Table 6). Another common response for South Australia, which was not so common for Victoria, was 'not seeing children grow up'.

**Table 6** *If you were to get a serious lung disease from your smoking, what would be the three worst things associated with that?*

Response	Vic (n=287) %	SA (n=121) %
Dying	44	49
Pain, suffering, the illness itself	41	47
Low quality of life/loss of lifestyle	30	31
Negative effect on family other than dying	27	24
Not seeing children grow up	18	35
Dying and leaving children behind	17	17
Financial problems	10	18
Treatment	7	12
Guilt/regret	6	3
Having to quit	5	3
Medical expenses	2	0
Other/don't know	7	2

*Respondents were prompted for responses. Multiple responses were possible, thus total may not add to 100%.*

To assess the extent to which smokers may be reacting against anti-smoking advertising, they were asked if they thought that the dangers of smoking had been exaggerated. The vast majority of respondents said they disagreed that the dangers of smoking had been exaggerated (see Table 7).

**Table 7** *The dangers of smoking have been exaggerated, do you agree or disagree?*

Response	Vic (n=287) %	SA (n=121) %
Strongly agree	6	4
Agree	17	15
Neither agree nor disagree	5	3
Disagree	36	32
Strongly disagree	31	42
Don't know/can't say	5	3

*Due to rounding not all columns sum to 100.*

The television advertisement was described to respondents and they were asked if they had seen this advertisement on television. Almost all (91% in Victoria and 93% in South Australia) said that they recalled the advertisement. Respondents who had seen the advertisement were asked if they found the advertisement to be ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ thought-provoking, believable or relevant. The order of these questions was rotated in Victoria but not in South Australia. The percentage of respondents who said that the advertisement was ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ believable was very high (91%) (see Table 8).

**Table 8** *Reactions to television advertisement: percentage who said ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’*

Result	Vic (n=260) %	SA (n=112) %
Thought-provoking	85	80
Believable	91	91
Relevant	77	67

Respondents were also asked ‘Thinking about this anti-smoking campaign as a whole, do you think it has made you more or less likely to quit?’. A large proportion of Victorians (42%), and an even larger proportion of South Australians (65%), said that it had made them more likely to quit.

## Discussion

The results of this study show that a substantial minority of parents reported having learnt something new about smoking and its effects on smokers and their families in the past six months, despite there having been considerable other campaign activity about smoking and its harmful effects over the preceding years. Many parents who smoke agree that parents can harm their children's lives by smoking, in addition to the potential harm to their health. Open-ended questions about how this may occur indicated that most respondents believed their continued smoking could increase the likelihood that their children would smoke or that it might affect their children emotionally. There were differences between Victoria and South Australia in relation to this question. Victorians were most concerned with the former and South Australians with the latter.

Most respondents said that, if they quit smoking permanently, their children would be happy, proud or relieved. This is not surprising, given that children are more likely than anyone else to try and get their parents to quit smoking.

When asked about the worst things associated with getting a serious lung disease from smoking, many parents identified effects on their children as well as the obvious effects of pain and death. Overall response to the advertisements was positive, with over 90% describing the advertisement as 'very believable' and over 80% finding it to be 'thought-provoking'.

Recall of the campaign was very good (over 90%) in both states. Given that more than one-third of parents said that the advertisement made them more likely to quit, it seems likely that the advertisement would have motivated many parents to quit smoking.

The 'Parents' campaign was successful in reaching its target audience of smoking parents, nearly all of whom recalled the campaign and found it believable, and the majority of whom said it was thought-provoking and personally relevant. Self-reported new learning about smoking and its impact on others, plus measures of beliefs about the consequences of smoking for family and children, indicate that the campaign may also have influenced parents' thoughts about the potential impact of their smoking on their children.

## References

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