

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Ms J Carney

to Minister for Family and Community Services

Anti-Smoking Programs

1. Minister are calls to the Quitline Line from the NT being monitored, if so how do the numbers compare over the past few years?
2. Minister I noted that the only media Quit smoking as a New Year's resolution received this year was an article about you quitting. When I was a Quit Smoking health promotion officer in the mid nineties we would run a media campaign in the lead up to New Years Eve promoting the Quitline. Calls to the help line would then go up dramatically:
 - a. why wasn't such a campaign run this year, given that smoking rates in the Territory remain the highest in the country? and
 - b. what is the operational budget for the Quit program in the Darwin area?
3. Minister as you know, Tuesday 31 May was World No Tobacco Day, why was it that this year, for the first time your department did not place any advertisements in the *NT News* promoting World No Tobacco Day and the Quitline?
4. The only print advertisement I could find was this one inserted on 25 May in the *Suburban*. It has a big photo of Minister Toyne on it with the words: 'Choose a healthier lifestyle on World No Tobacco Day.'
 - a. why was there no mention of when World No Tobacco Day was? and
 - b. why was no advice given as to how someone could choose a healthier lifestyle?
5. Minister what do you think the purpose of this advertisement was?
6. How are people assisted/facilitated to quit smoking in Central Australia?

ANSWER

Calls to the Northern Territory Quitline have been monitored since January 2003 and the volume of calls has increased every year. In 2003, the NT Quitline received 757 calls, in 2004, 1045 calls and from 1 January to 30 June 2005, 636 calls have been recorded.

The Northern Territory was unable to run a dedicated New Years Quit campaign for 2005 promoting the Quitline as the Department of Health and Community Services' Alcohol and Other Drugs Program was tendering for a new Quitline service. The tender specifications were developed to ensure a better telephone counselling service for people seeking help to quit smoking. The tender process was completed in April 2005 in time for the World No Tobacco Day 2005 campaign.

An article in the *NT News* on 4 March 2004 had a significant impact on calls to the Quitline, comparable to the impact of a media campaign. The day the article, about the previous Minister for Family and Community Services Ms Marion Scrymgour MLA, quitting smoking was printed, eight people called the Quitline. The following day, 12 people called, the day a member of the public wrote to the *NT News* to congratulate the previous Minister, a further 12 people called the Quitline.

The operational budget for the Northern Territory Quit Program is calculated at approximately \$2.40 per head of population (based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics population statistics as at December 2004). However, the operational budget isn't regionally separated as running a media campaign, distributing leaflets, training staff etc. is done as Territory wide initiatives, not regional initiatives.

The Department planned to focus on workplace initiatives to support the World No Tobacco Day this year, based on the national and international evidence supporting the fact that unpaid media (true human interest stories) generate more quit attempts than paid media advertising. The Alcohol and Other Drugs Program ran three Quit groups in the lead up to World No Tobacco Day. The media showed interest in photo opportunities to further promote workplace Quit groups. An article was printed in the *NT News* on 2 June 2005 resulting in a further nine calls to the Quitline compared to the 11 received on 31 May 2005. A further article published in the June 2005 *Chronicle* regarding workplace quit groups and promoting the new Quitline number *13 QUIT* resulted in again, a further 11 calls to the Quitline. Since the launch of the workplace Quit groups and the publication of an advertising flyer, a further three groups have been successfully completed with a group at Palmerston High School due to commence in the near future.

Two staff of the Alcohol and Other Drugs Service Central Australia (ADSCA) who are experienced in working with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal smokers, are trained as quit educators and facilitators for the region. These staff are in process of achieving train the trainer status to broaden the skill base of other agencies in the region to deliver quit education and facilitation of quit groups. This is consistent with outcomes of the consultation process, involving a range of internal and external stakeholders, currently underway across the Northern Territory to develop a Tobacco Strategy and Action Plan to work more collaboratively with non government organisations and other Government programs to effectively deliver accredited Quit education and facilitation on a larger scale.

Clients in Central Australia may access counselling support via the Quitline that refers callers, upon request, to identified staff at the Alcohol and Drug Service Central Australia (ADSCA) to arrange face to face quit counselling. In addition, ADSCA identifies tobacco awareness and cessation as a priority in health promotion and brief intervention activities in the region to communities. Individuals including in-patients at the Alice Springs Hospital and specific groups such as remote women's and men's groups throughout the region, where individuals are provided with immediate tobacco cessation information and advice and can also be referred to the ADSCA for quit counselling on request.