



Media Release. Embargoed until 0100 Wednesday December 20, 2017

**JT campaign leads to overwhelming support in Queensland for raising the cigarette purchase age to 21**  
**@dontsmoke21 #dontsmoke21**

The multi-media campaign, to raise the age for buying cigarettes to 21 years, is gaining strong momentum in Queensland, with a powerful 81 per cent of voters backing the adoption of this life-saving policy.

The fresh polling, commissioned by the Minderoo Foundation on behalf of the Eliminating Cancer Initiative (ECI), shows an overwhelming desire, among Queenslanders, for the re-elected State ALP Government to act swiftly on lifting the age young people can buy cigarettes, from 18 to 21.

The Galaxy Research poll, taken across four marginal Queensland seats in early December, found support for the policy had swelled to 81 per cent, from 75 per cent just one month earlier.

A wide cross section of support was revealed across the 718 voters polled: women (82%), men (79%) and, crucially, 18-21 age group (69%).

Three-quarters of all smokers support the plan, with non-smokers 82 per cent in favour.

The research comes after leading Australian rugby player and Queensland's Australian of the Year, Mr Johnathan Thurston, fronted a television, radio, print and social media campaign, in the lead up to the November state election.

ECI, co-founded by Australia's leading philanthropists Andrew and Nicola Forrest, is calling on state and territory governments to back this policy step change to prevent young people from becoming hooked on cigarettes for life.

95 percent of adult smokers start before they turn 21<sup>1</sup>. If vulnerable young Australians can be prevented from smoking before that age, they are unlikely to ever form the habit.

"About 450,000 Queenslanders smoke every day<sup>2</sup>," Mr Forrest said. "Up to two-thirds of them will die from their habit.<sup>3</sup> But we can change these horrific outcomes, if we work together to stop lifetime smoking habits from forming.

This polling provides the Queensland government, and all others, with the definitive evidence that action is not only needed but that it has the tremendous backing of Australians; young and old, smoker or not."

Mr Thurston said he was thrilled with the research results that showed the 'Stop Smoking Before It Starts' campaign was positively received and attracted support from the vast majority of Queenslanders.

"I have three beautiful, young daughters and I don't want them growing up, with peer pressure, to smoke," Mr Thurston said. "I have no doubt the returned Queensland Government, and all state governments, will adopt this important health initiative." ENDS

*The Galaxy research and the JT campaign adverts can be accessed at [stopsmokingbeforeitstarts.org.au](http://stopsmokingbeforeitstarts.org.au)*

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## FAST FACTS

- Queensland has the third-highest rate of daily smoking after Tasmania and the Northern Territory (14.5% compared to 16%TAS and 17.2%NT)<sup>4</sup>
- Queensland's vulnerable are the most affected by smoking - unemployed (28%), homeless (77%), and sole parents (37%)<sup>5</sup>
- Almost half a million Queenslanders smoke every day<sup>6</sup>. In Australia, up to two-thirds of deaths in current smokers can be attributed to smoking.<sup>7</sup>
- Twice as many blue-collar Queensland workers smoke compared to their white-collar counterparts.
- In regional Queensland, the smoking rate is 30-40 per cent higher than in the cities
- Smoking rates among indigenous Queenslanders are more than double that of the national rate.
- Smoking rates for disadvantaged males in Queensland has not changed in 12 years.
- 15,000 Australians die each year from smoking related illnesses<sup>8</sup>
- The economic and health cost to Queensland was \$6.3 billion last year<sup>9</sup>

### **For media inquiries:**

**Jannette Cotterell. Minderoo Foundation. +61 (0) 473 333 302. [jcotterell@minderoo.com.au](mailto:jcotterell@minderoo.com.au)**

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<sup>1</sup> Institute of Medicine, Public Health Implications of Raising the Minimum Age of Legal Access to Tobacco Products (The National Academies Press, 2015) 43

<https://www.nap.edu/read/18997/chapter/4#43>

<sup>2</sup> Queensland Health. Smoking Prevention Strategy 2017 to 2020.

[https://www.health.qld.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0022/651802/health-wellbeing-strategic-framework-smoking.pdf](https://www.health.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0022/651802/health-wellbeing-strategic-framework-smoking.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Tobacco smoking and all-cause mortality in a large Australian cohort study: findings from a mature epidemic with current low smoking prevalence. Banks et al. 2016.

<https://bmcmmedicine.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s12916-015-0281-z?site=bmcmmedicine.biomedcentral.com>

<sup>4</sup> Australia Institute of Health and Welfare. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2016: detailed findings.

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/b8c878f7-d79f-412e-92d5-ceb6bdbd54e1/chapter-7-state-territory.xlsx.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> Queensland Health. Smoking Prevention Strategy 2017 to 2020.

[https://www.health.qld.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0022/651802/health-wellbeing-strategic-framework-smoking.pdf](https://www.health.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0022/651802/health-wellbeing-strategic-framework-smoking.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Queensland Health. Smoking Prevention Strategy 2017 to 2020.

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<sup>7</sup> Tobacco smoking and all-cause mortality in a large Australian cohort study: findings from a mature epidemic with current low smoking prevalence. Banks et al. 2016.

<https://bmcmmedicine.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s12916-015-0281-z?site=bmcmmedicine.biomedcentral.com>

<sup>8</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *National Health Survey: First Results, 2014-15* (10 May 2017) Smoking

<<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4364.0.55.001~2014-15~Main%20Features~Smoking~24>>.

<sup>9</sup> Queensland Health. The health of Queenslanders 2016: report of the Chief Health Officer Queensland. Queensland Government: Brisbane; 2016.

[https://www.health.qld.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/537101/cho-report-complete.pdf](https://www.health.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/537101/cho-report-complete.pdf)