

Oral Cancer Policy

Oral cancers occur on the surfaces of the mouth and throat. These surfaces include the lips, inside of the cheeks, tongue, floor of the mouth, larynx, pharynx, hard and soft palate.

NOHA is concerned that:

- Oral cancer is increasing - 1700 new cases per year in Australia. Mortality rates are high, 20% in early cases and 80% if lymph nodes are involved (Victorian Dentist, 2019).
- The social determinants of health have a strong influence on oral cancer incidence and mortality (Johnson et al, 2011).
- Most oral cancers are initiated by tobacco use (Chaturvedi et al, 2019).
- Alcohol is a risk factor for oral cancer (Al Moustafa 2017).
- The combined exposure of tobacco and alcohol greatly increases risk of oral cancer (Pelluci et al., 2006).
- Betel nut chewing, with or without added tobacco, is a risk factor for oral cancer (Guha et al, 2014).
- Vaping may be a risk factor for oral cancer (WHO 2019).
- Throat cancer numbers are increasing with about 85% cases caused by the human papilloma virus (Victorian Dentist, 2019).
- Tobacco smoking rates are much higher amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples Australians [42%] compared with non-Indigenous Australians [15%] (AIHW, 2018).

NOHA position:

- NOHA strongly supports Australia's tobacco control laws that include plain packaging, graphic warnings, advertising bans, point-of-sale restrictions, tobacco excise, and bans on sport sponsorship.
- Mass media campaigns, telephone help-lines, restrictions on smoking in public areas, adequate funding and access to nicotine replacement therapies and are important parts of a public health approach to reducing tobacco and alcohol use.
- Tobacco control and alcohol reducing initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be co-designed with, led by, and accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Donations from tobacco and alcohol beverage companies and organisations associated with the tobacco industry to political parties, politicians and candidates should be banned.
- The risks from betel nut chewing require greater promotion to the Australian public.

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NOHA members

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