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MEDIA STATEMENT

ASMI welcomes Government decision on nicotine replacement therapy

The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI), the industry body representing non-prescription consumer healthcare products today applauded the decision of the Federal Government to widen the availability of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) to low income consumers to help them to quit smoking.

The Executive Director of ASMI, Dr Deon Schoombie said that NRT is an approach that is proven to have a significant impact in reducing smoking. A recent Cochrane review concluded that NRT almost doubles the success rate of long term abstinence.¹

“It represents a textbook case where a readily available over-the-counter medicine can be incorporated into an integrated public health campaign alongside other treatments and support services. The Minister for Health and the government should be congratulated for this very sensible and timely decision,” he said.

The Government has announced that from next February, concession card holders will be able to access Nicotine transdermal patches (Nicorette®, Nicabate P® and Nicotinell®) under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) as part of a smoking cessation program.

Broader use of NRT was one of the recommendations contained in the 2009 report of the National Preventative Health Taskforce. The use of NRT alongside support like telephone help services is likely to make positive inroads into one of the most costly and debilitating health problems. The evidence shows that most smokers make several attempts to quit, so it is important that they have access to products and support services that will optimise their chances of success.

“The safety profile, efficacy and low cost of NRT should position it in the front line of treatment prescribed by GPs for smoking cessation, a position supported by the National Prescribing Service,” Dr Schoombie said.

About ASMI: The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI) is the peak industry body for the Australian self care industry representing consumer healthcare products including over-the-counter medicines and complementary medicines. ASMI’s mission is to promote better health through responsible self-care. This means ensuring that safe and effective self-care products are readily available to all Australians at a reasonable cost. ASMI works to encourage responsible use by consumers and an increasing role for cost-effective self-medication products as part of the broad national health strategy. www.asmi.com.au

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¹ Stead LF, Perera R, Bullen C, Mant D, Lancaster T. *Nicotine replacement therapy for smoking cessation, Review 2008, Issue 1, Art.No: CD000146. DOI:10.1002/14651858.CD000146.pub3.*