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MEDIA STATEMENT

ASMI welcomes proposal for nicotine replacement therapy to help smokers quit

The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI), the industry body representing non-prescription consumer healthcare products today welcomed suggestions that industry play a greater role in preventative health including the possibility of increasing access to Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) as part of the Government efforts to reduce smoking rates.

The suggestion is contained in the Discussion Paper released today by the National Preventative Health Taskforce.

The Taskforce report raises the idea of subsidising NRT through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme or telephone help services such as Quitline. It also discusses the option of making NRT more readily available to Indigenous communities.

NRT is a proven therapy that reduces withdrawal symptoms associated with smoking and has helped thousands of smokers worldwide. It is available in various forms including gum, lozenges, patches for the skin, nasal spray and inhalers.

The Executive Director of ASMI, Juliet Seifert, said this was one way in which industry could play a constructive role in bringing its expertise to address the issue of preventative health.

“It is just one of a number of ways in which the resources and expertise of the industry can be utilized to improve health outcomes.

“Nicotine replacement therapy is an approach that has been scientifically demonstrated to have a significant impact in reducing smoking,” she said.

A recent Cochrane review concluded that NRT almost doubles long term success rates.¹

“It has been estimated that approximately one third of smokers make at least one attempt to quit in any single year, suggesting that more effort needs to be placed on assisting those people who want to cease smoking.

“It makes sense for effective and proven approaches to smoking cessation to be able to play a front line role in future preventative health campaigns.

“NRT presents 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”.

¹ Silagy c, Lancaster T, Stead I, Mant D, Fowler G, *Nicotine replacement therapy for smoking cessation (Review)*, The Cochrane Collaboration, John Wiley & Sons Ltd 2007

Ms Seifert said the Taskforce has taken a fresh approach to tackling some of the most prevalent and costly public health problems, namely tobacco, alcohol and obesity.

“As with smoking, there is room for government and industry to adopt a partnership approach to tackle the issue of overweight and obesity through a combination of improved diet, exercise and appropriate medication where necessary.

“There is no reason why we should not harnesses the best of both worlds to achieve optimum health outcomes and the best return on investment for publicly funded preventative health campaigns,” she 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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