**Media Release**

Contact: Imogen Baratta on 0431165 524 or [imogen.baratta@cancervic.org.au](mailto:imogen.baratta@cancervic.org.au)

Quit Victoria launches confronting new campaign to reverse 2020 fall in Quitline calls

Quit Victoria has launched a new, hard hitting anti-smoking campaign as data from the Victorian Quitline revealed calls to the service plummeted in 2020 when there were no campaigns on air.

Data from Cancer Council Victoria showed that calls to the Victorian Quitline across 2018, 2019 and 2020 tracked most closely to periods when television-led [mass media campaigns](https://www.cancervic.org.au/downloads/cbrc_research_papers/CBRC_RPS_No.50.pdf) were on air. The biggest factor contributing to the decrease in inbound calls in 2020 (11,564), compared to 2018 (12,205) and to 2019 (14,038), appeared to be the absence of campaigns in 2020.

Dr Sandro Demaio, chief executive officer of VicHealth, said government investment in anti-smoking campaigns has been shown to protect and extend thousands of Victorian lives.

“Health campaigns help shape community attitudes to smoking that prevent kids from taking it up, while also motivating Victorians who smoke to seek support to quit, and protecting ex-smokers from returning to the habit,” Dr Demaio said. “Campaigns like this are essential for reducing smoking rates and enabling more Victorians to lead healthier, happier and longer lives.”

Quit’s new campaign highlights the link between smoking and laryngeal (throat) cancer and features anaesthetist, Dr Hamish Mace, demonstrating, in graphic and gory detail, the impact of smoking on the voicebox.

Mr Todd Harper, chief executive officer of Cancer Council Victoria said that people who smoke are at increased risk of developing head and neck cancers, which include cancers of the oral cavity, nasal cavity, sinuses, pharynx and larynx.

“Approximately 77% of laryngeal cancers are caused by smoking, but when someone stops smoking, their risk of developing head and neck cancer immediately starts to fall. Within 1 to 4 years of quitting, that risk has fallen by 30%,” Mr Harper said.

Dr Sarah White, director of Quit said it was well-established that anti-smoking campaigns drive calls to the Quitline and to seek help to quit.

“The most effective way to have a go at quitting is to use a combination of coaching and support from the [Quitline](https://www.quit.org.au/) plus smoking cessation medications you can get from your GP, she said. “And the best time to have a go at quitting is right now.”

For more quitting advice, visit <https://www.quit.org.au/> or call the Quitline on 13 7848 between 8am and 8pm Monday to Friday. Quitline is a non-judgemental and culturally inclusive telephone service for all, including the [LGBTIQ+ community](https://www.quit.org.au/articles/lgbtiq/). [Aboriginal Quitline](https://www.quit.org.au/articles/aboriginal-quitline/) counsellors are also available.

For more on the campaign, visit quit.org.au/voicebox.

**<ENDS>**

*Quit Victoria is a partnership between VicHealth, the State Government of Victoria and Cancer Council Victoria. For more information, visit:* [*quit.org.au*](http://www.quit.org.au)