

TASKFORCESUBMISSION: submission

NAME: Annie McDonald

POSITION: Tobacco treatment specialist

ORGANISATION: South Eastern Sydney Illawarra Area Health Service

SUBMISSION1: Hello, I have been in the role of tobacco treatment within Drug & Alcohol Services for almost 14 years. All the strategies outlined in the document have great merit but the one I wish to emphasise is a strategy to increase access to Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) products to key priority groups.

People with a chronic or recurring mental illness: Smoking rates amongst this group are significantly higher than the general population, these people also tend to smoke more heavily and be more highly dependent on nicotine. During many years of working with these clients I would argue that one of the most significant barriers to them quitting smoking is the financial outlay for NRT products, particularly as so many require a combination of NRT products to do well. The prescription meds that have been placed on the PBS (Zyban & Champix) are usually not suitable for this population so NRT is really their best and only option. Access to free or heavily subsidised NRT, once a year, coupled with cessation support in Mental Health rehab centres for people with a mental illness would go a long way to seeing some change to these high smoking rates.

People on low incomes: We know that access to NRT is a major barrier to people on low incomes. I would encourage our government to provide free or heavily subsidised NRT, once a year, perhaps through an outpatients setting which could provide guidance on correct use and dosages of NRT products as well as support, to anyone on a Health Care Card along the lines of the recently introduced ATSI NRT access program.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy is well supported by the evidence as being a first line pharmacotherapy treatment - it should be made available on the PBS as a priority.

Sincerely thanking you
Annie McDonald

PRIVACY: yes

SUBMIT: Submit