

500 schoolchildren a day start puffing: survey

SYDNEY — More than 500 Australian schoolchildren start smoking every day, according to a new report.

And each day 192 children become regular smokers — three times the number of people who die daily from smoking related diseases.

In SA every day, 16 children become regular smokers and 47 experiment with cigarettes.

The survey was conducted by the Perth-based Australian Council on Smoking and Health, which is made

up of medical and health groups concerned with reducing smoking-induced death and disease.

Council director Ms Ruth Shean said the tobacco industry needed to recruit at least 64 smokers daily to replace those who died from smoking-related diseases.

"At present the industry is recruiting three times as many kids as it needs to, to replace the smokers who die," Ms Shean said.

"It really is a case of new smokers for old.

"These days, smoking starts when kids are still in primary school.

"And because nicotine is an addictive drug, those children who start smoking regularly as kids may well become hooked for life."

The council said parents who smoke should keep their cigarettes out of the reach of children.

"If you do smoke, treat your cigarettes the way you treat all other poisons in the house — keep them well out of the reach of children," the council said.

have the power to exempt certain events such as Test cricket, the Adelaide Grand Prix or Davis Cup tennis.

Under the proposal, the Government will increase the price of cigarettes by possibly 15c or 20c a packet to finance a special fund to compensate clubs and organisations which will lose tobacco industry sponsorship.

Dr Cornwall hopes the SA Parliament will approve the measure without the compromise forced on the Victorian Government which gave an option to clubs and organisations to either draw sponsorship from the

Government fund or from tobacco firms.

It is likely that while the Liberal Party will oppose the legislation on the grounds that smoking is a legal pastime, the Australian Democrats will vote with the Government in the Legislative Council to pass the Bill.

The Adelaide University study results will strengthen the Government's hand in the debate because the findings indicate smoking is a major cause of deaths in SA, and spell out the number of smoking-related deaths in the electorate of every Member of the House of Assembly.

tage of smoking-related deaths around 21 p.c. in all cases.

The report shows the highest number of smoking-related deaths occurred in the seat of Morphett, in the Glenelg district, where there were 140 smoking deaths out of a total of 682 deaths — a percentage of 20.5.

The lowest number were in Briggs in the northern suburbs where there were only 48 smoking deaths in a total of 222, or 21.6 p.c.

"When someone dies after a road crash, or as a result of an outbreak of infectious disease, the death may receive widespread publicity, with calls for the relevant authorities to take action to prevent further deaths," the report says.

"Smoking deaths are different.

"When someone dies from a disease caused by smoking, their death rarely attracts this sort of attention.

"Further, unlike dramatic deaths where the causal agent is obvious to all, the long time normally occurring between starting smoking and the onset of the disease tends to obscure the role of smoking as a risk factor for health.

"In fact, based on the available epidemiological evidence, it can be predicted that approximately 21 p.c. of deaths occurring among South Australian registered voters are due to smoking."