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Women's health going up in smoke

Australian Unity has been rewarding its members to butt out, and with more and more women taking up smoking it seems more puff is needed in quit smoking messages.

Australian Unity's head of Health Amanda Hagan said, the announcement of the federal governments plan to remove tobacco advertising and increase the price of cigarettes, couldn't have come at a better time.

"According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, more Australian women each year are being diagnosed with smoking related diseases with tracheal and lung cancer overtaking breast cancer as the leading cause of cancer death among women.

"Here at Australian Unity we take the preventative approach and offer our members approved quit smoking courses run by members approved quit smoking courses run by reputable and well known organisations.

"When you're ready to make a fresh start, we'll give you up to \$120 on completion of an approved quit smoking course. Not only will your lungs thank you, but so will your wallet," she said.

She said the affects of smoking on a females body is not limited to lung and mouth cancers.

"Women who smoke also increase the chance of developing cervical cancer and increase the risk of stroke and heart disease."

Australian Unity also extends its quit smoking program to all permanent employees.

"As a wellbeing company it is really important that we lead by example. Australian Unity is serious about helping our staff to lead healthy, smoke free lives. This is why we provide generous financial support of up to \$300 per employee for those who have decided they want to quit.

"We support our employees through a selected program and therapies which may include patches, chewing gum, hypnotherapy or acupuncture.

"So stop watching your health go up in smoke and do something about it today and enjoy a healthier tomorrow," Ms Hagan said.

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For further information on Australian Unity's quit incentive call 13 29 39.
For media enquiries contact Australian Unity's Public Affairs Adviser Sarah Kulman, on 0400 006 295.

Notes to editors

Australian Unity is a national healthcare, financial services and retirement living organisation providing services to more than 560,000 Australians, including some 325,000 members nationwide.

Australian Unity operates the sixth largest health fund in Australia, covering over 280,000 members; and GU Health which provides tailored health plans to some of Australia's leading corporations. Australian Unity also operates dental clinics and other allied health services, including Remedy Healthcare, a new preventative health business that offers specific chronic disease management programs and is starting to provide in-home rehabilitation services for members and customers recovering from injury or surgery.

Australian Unity's history as a trusted mutual organisation dates back 170 years. It has grown organically – by continually evolving and providing the services and products needed by the communities it serves – as well as through successful strategic mergers and diversification into new business activities.