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Subject: NIB program helps employees kick the habit

Smoking is the single greatest cause of death and disease in Australia today. And according to the World Health Organisation, global annual deaths from smoking are expected to double to 10 million by 2020.

NIB Health Funds Limited (NIB) has taken a small but significant step to arrest these alarming statistics, launching an innovative program to help employees quit smoking.

NIB Chief Executive Officer, Mark Fitzgibbon said a six-week program has been offered free of charge to employees who are given the option of using hypnotherapy, nicotine patches or gum to help break the habit.

"In total, 65 of our employees have taken up the challenge and after four weeks many participants have already stopped smoking and are well on the way to kicking the habit for good," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

One employee who has taken up the challenge is Janelle Krohn. For more than 24 years she regarded herself as a "social smoker" but after only one hypnotherapy session she is proud to now call herself a non-smoker.

"I have thought about giving up smoking for some time and the program offered at work prompted me to do something about it," Ms Krohn said.

"I was very surprised by the simplicity and effectiveness of the hypnotherapy. I did one session and since then have had no desire to smoke, even when I'm around people who are.

"I know the long term benefits for my health are significant but I'm already feeling better for not smoking and I have no inclination to go back to the habit."

Mr Fitzgibbon believes the establishment of this program is testament to the importance NIB places on the health and well being of its 580 employees across Australia.

"There is no doubt this will provide tangible benefits for our employees and the business.

"By giving up smoking, our employees will see an improvement in their general health in the short-term and also reduce the risk of developing long-term health problems associated with smoking, such as lung cancer and coronary heart disease.

"In turn, this will lead to greater productivity for the health fund through a reduction in absenteeism costs attributable to smoking. These include less time off work due to serious smoking related diseases and less sick leave due to fewer respiratory infections in both smokers and non-smoking employees."

NIB's QUIT program coincides with the World Health Organisation's annual *World No Tobacco Day* on 31 May.

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