

MEDIA RELEASE

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A Good Health Report Card for the Australian Petroleum Industry

AIP and its member companies welcome the very encouraging results of the industry's 15th *Health Watch* Report released today by Monash University.

Overall, the *Health Watch* Study clearly shows that petroleum industry employees have better health than the general Australian community and are less likely to die from cancer and from heart, respiratory and digestive diseases.

For almost 40 years, AIP has sponsored the independent *Health Watch* study to monitor the health of petroleum industry employees. The study underpins the very longstanding commitment of the industry to the health and wellbeing of their employees.

This internationally recognised research covers over 20,000 past and present employees during their time in the industry and tracks them when they leave or retire to examine death and cancer rates. The *Health Watch* report provides a detailed analysis of cancer risk and causes of death by industry sector and job, and then compares these findings to the data for the overall Australian community.

The study provides valuable insights into the influences on employee health, such as the relationship between the incidence of various cancers and working in the industry, and the measurable effects of smoking and drinking. The findings of the study assist the petroleum industry to develop workplace policies and programs that are providing safe and healthy working environments.

The latest Report builds on the results of the preceding fourteen reports in demonstrating that the chance of developing most types of cancer (cancer incidence) is no different for men and women in this industry compared with other Australians. Where cancers and deaths do occur, the overall death rates for men and women in the petroleum industry workforce are much (20%) lower than the national rates, and significantly lower for men in all major disease categories. Importantly, the chance of dying or of getting cancer or heart disease are similar no matter where employees worked in the industry including upstream production sites, refineries, fuel terminals and airports.

In terms of lifestyle factors influencing employee health, the latest Report shows that smoking has a powerful influence on ill health and mortality, and that quitting smoking noticeably reduces the risks. It is estimated that smoking has played a part in about 50% of deaths among *Health Watch* members who smoke.

The 15th *Health Watch* Report was undertaken by the Monash Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health, a leading international centre for epidemiological programs and collaborative research at Monash University. AIP and its member companies are committed to supporting *Health Watch* because it is highly valued by the industry and their employees and provides a robust scientific basis for the community to understand the potential health impacts from exposure to petroleum products. AIP thanks the thousands of employees who continue to participate in *Health Watch* to enhance understanding of the health impacts of working in the petroleum industry.

The 15th *Health Watch* Report can be downloaded from <https://aip.com.au/programs/health-watch> and inquiries can be directed to Nathan Dickens, Deputy CEO, at ndickens@aip.com.au or (02)6247 3044.

BACKGROUND

Summary of Health Watch Results

Compared to the general Australian population, members of *Health Watch* have:

- lower overall death rates for men and women (around 20% lower);
- lower death rates for men in all major disease categories, including heart disease (28% lower), cancer (12% lower), respiratory disease (24% lower), diseases of the digestive system (28% lower) and external causes such as accidents (32% lower);
- the same chance overall of developing most types of cancer;
- lower death rates and cancer incidence for women in the industry compared to that of Australian women generally, but there is only a comparatively small number of women in the study population.
- for men, lower rates of lung cancer (20% lower), liver cancer, and cancers of the lip, oral cavity and pharynx, and similar rates for most other cancers including leukaemia (which was a previous concern), bladder and kidney cancer, and cancers of the colon, stomach and pancreas;
- a reducing risk now of leukaemia, including lower rates than nationally for one leukaemia type known to be associated with benzene exposure, called Acute Myeloid Leukaemia (AML);
- higher rates of melanoma and prostate cancer, but deaths from these cancers are the same as that for the general population; the report suggests that workplace factors or exposures in the petroleum industry are not a likely explanation for these cancer rates;
- higher rates of mesothelioma, likely to be associated with asbestos exposure in the 1950s and 1960s and could also be from asbestos exposure outside the petroleum industry.

The mortality of male employees does not differ between workers at various workplaces in the industry (e.g. refineries, fuel terminals, airports and upstream production sites) and compares favourably with the rates in all Australian men.

Smoking as played a part in around 50% of deaths of smokers and the overall death rates were lower for low to moderate drinkers compared to total abstainers.

About AIP

The Australian Institute of Petroleum (AIP) was established in 1976 as the peak industry body representing Australia's downstream petroleum industry. AIP's mission is to promote and assist in the development of a sustainable, internationally competitive petroleum products industry, operating efficiently, economically and safely, and in harmony with the environment and community standards.

AIP provides a wide range of factual information and industry data to assist policy makers, analysts and the community in understanding the key market and industry factors influencing Australia's downstream petroleum sector. AIP is also represented on key government-industry advisory bodies and statutory committees, and also sponsors or manages important industry environmental and health programs. The Australian Marine Oil Spill Centre (AMOSC) is a wholly owned AIP subsidiary.

AIP's core member companies are involved in refining and marketing of petroleum products and include BP Australia Pty Ltd, Caltex Australia Limited, Mobil Oil Australia Pty Ltd & Viva Energy Australia Pty Ltd.

These four core AIP member companies operate all major petroleum refineries in Australia and supply around 90% of the transport fuel market with bulk petroleum fuels. AIP's associate members comprise an additional 28 major companies engaged in the petroleum industry or seeking access to services provided by AIP or its subsidiary, AMOSC. More information is available from www.aip.com.au.