

Media Release

For immediate release



Zita's emotional story to target parents who smoke.

Zita Roberts was a 37-year-old, mother of three children under the age of fourteen, with a loving partner and supportive parents. Zita also died of lung cancer – cancer caused by her smoking.

Her powerful and emotional story has been made into a series of television commercials by The Cancer Council Western Australia and will be aired throughout Tasmania from Monday August 10.

The campaign features Zita talking about the impact that smoking had on her and her loved ones especially her three children, Alicia, Mika and Jed, husband Chris and her parents.

Glenn Mitchell, Quit Tasmania's Health Promotion Officer, said Zita's honest and direct description of what smoking has cost her is a compelling message for all smokers.

"There's no escaping the human toll that cigarettes take. Sadly, Zita is one of many whose smoking will have the most serious of consequences," Mr Mitchell said.

Zita began smoking at a very young age, at a time when education about the dangers of smoking was not widely known and before there were restrictions on the advertising of tobacco or printed warnings on packaging.

Quit Tasmania applauds Zita, as well as thanking her surviving family for allowing her story to be used in Tasmania. People with lung cancer often feel guilty about their disease and a sense of shame that perhaps they could have done something to prevent their illness.

"It's a very courageous thing she has done. Zita was very passionate about making a difference and using the time she had left in a positive way to prevent other families from losing loved ones to smoking," Mr Mitchell said.

Data from the Tasmanian Cancer Registry shows that lung cancer was the most common cause of cancer related death in Tasmania in 2005. There are around 240 lung cancer deaths each year, with 267 Tasmanian's diagnosed with lung cancer (158 men / 109 women) in 2005.

Amazingly, Zita described her cancer as a blessing in disguise. She felt lucky that she was able to spend time with her family and say her goodbyes. While she had the opportunity, she also wanted to show people the terrible reality of what she and her family experienced.

"We all hope that Zita's story will strike a chord with smokers and prompt them into quitting".

"Don't kid yourself that smoking isn't as bad as 'they say', or that you'll quit before it's too late. Do it for yourself, do it for your family, and do it for those who care about you," Mr Mitchell said.

For advice and support with quitting, call the Quitline on 137 848 or go to www.quittas.org.au or talk to your GP or pharmacist.

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