

Media Release



18 March 2009

ABS STATISTICS: CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE REMAINS LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH

Statistics released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), again highlight the devastating impact of cardiovascular disease on the Australian population. Cardiovascular disease remains the number one killer, responsible for 34% of all deaths in Australia.

Dr Lyn Roberts, Heart Foundation CEO-National, said, "Today's figures highlight the urgent need for a national action plan for cardiovascular disease (CVD). CVD is responsible for 18% of the nation's total burden of disease and injury, and yet most of it – around 80%, is largely preventable."

"Australia has been at the leading edge in tackling the modern epidemic of heart disease but there is a real danger that unless it receives attention that supports its status as a national priority area those gains could be lost" Dr Roberts explained.

The Heart Foundation fears that deaths rates could in fact rise in the years ahead. Increases in risk factors for cardiovascular disease such as obesity, lack of physical activity and high blood pressure and blood cholesterol coupled with an aging population mean that there is a real threat that deaths from CVD will actually increase. Latest predictions are that by 2051 cardiovascular disease could affect one in four Australians.

The figures released today showed a decrease in the number of deaths from heart attack over a nine year period, but the deaths from cardiovascular disease remain unchanged from last year.

Commenting on these figures Dr Roberts said, "The Heart Foundation is pleased that deaths from heart attacks, a subcomponent of cardiovascular disease, have declined but we are very concerned that this decline in deaths from heart attacks will lull the Australian population and policy makers into a false sense of security".

"There has been some real progress over the past ten years in how we manage and treat CVD which has had a significant impact on death rates from coronary heart disease but the problem has not gone away" Dr Roberts added.

Boiler Plate:

About the Heart Foundation

This year the Heart Foundation marks its 50th anniversary as Australia's leading voice on heart health.

The Heart Foundation saves lives and improves health through funding world-class cardiovascular research, guidelines for health professionals, informing the public and assisting people with cardiovascular disease.

While the work over the past five decades has helped reduce the number of deaths, cardiovascular disease (heart, stroke and blood vessel disease) remains one of Australia's most devastating health problems.

As a charity, the Heart Foundation relies on donations and gifts in Wills to continue its lifesaving research, education and health promotion work. For further information visit www.heartfoundation.org.au or call 1300 36 27 87.

[Click here](#) to view the ABS Causes of Death 2007 statistics.

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