Cancer care in the Territory has improved dramatically over the past 10 years - including a 64% drop in cervical cancer rates, smoking reforms and the opening of the NT’s first Cancer Care Centre, Health Minister Kon Vatskalis said today on World Cancer Day.

Mr Vatskalis is encouraging all Territorians to think about how a healthy lifestyle and regular cancer screening can reduce their risk of cancer.

He added that since last World Cancer Day, the Northern Territory has seen a major advancement in its cancer care services with the establishment of the joint Australian and Northern Territory Government Alan Walker Cancer Care Centre.

“The Northern Territory Government is absolutely committed to improving both cancer awareness and prevention, as well as care for Territorians, Mr Vatskalis said.

“We are seeing prevention and awareness campaigns have an impact with a 64 per cent drop in cervical cancer death rates in the Territory since introducing the Pap smear program. Together with the introduction of the Gardasil vaccine, we expect cervical cancer rates to continue to decline in to the future,” he said.

“In 2010 we also saw the rollout of digital breast screening in the Northern Territory, another advancement in the early intervention and detection of breast cancer.

“In the areas of health promotion we see a continued focus on improving lifestyle factors such as nutrition and exercise, and reducing smoking and alcohol consumption, which we know contribute to certain types of cancer.

“Smoking is a major cause of many cancers, including lung, throat and mouth cancer. Tightening of anti-smoking legislation and increased support is helping smokers on their path to quitting.”

Mr Vatskalis said since the establishment of the Alan Walker Cancer Care Centre more than 250 patients had been treated.

“And with the addition of a second linear accelerator in December, the state-of-the-art facility has doubled its capacity for radiotherapy patients,” Mr Vatskalis said.

“It is reassuring to know that Territorians can now access some of the best care in Australia, in terms of both radiotherapy and chemotherapy, without having to travel interstate and away from family.

“A lot has been achieved in the name of cancer prevention and treatment in the Territory since last World Cancer Day, and the Territory Government continues to work towards further advancements in cancer care and prevention in to the future.”

Contact: Maria Billias 0401 119 746