

Media Release

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South Western Sydney Local Health District to boost smoking compliance at hospitals

South Western Sydney Local Health District is stepping up its compliance with smoking laws from today as part of a new pilot program to protect the community's health.

The program will see staff from the Ministry of Health's Tobacco Enforcement Unit visiting local hospitals to remind people about the laws prohibiting smoking in health facilities and within four metres of an entrance or exit to a public building.

The NSW Government invested \$4.4 million in the 2017-18 State Budget to tackle smoking along with \$1.8 million for the Cancer Institute NSW's Quitline and iCanQuit services.

Director of Population Health, Dr Stephen Conaty, said this was an important initiative to protect the health of patients, staff and visitors at hospitals across the District.

"Smoking is the leading cause of disease and premature death, and we're fully committed to reducing its impact on people's lives," he said.

"South Western Sydney aims to make sure our communities are as healthy as they can be, and smoking outside hospital front entrances sends the wrong message to our community.

"Smoking within 4 metres of an entrance to a public building is also against the law. . .

"Inspectors from the Tobacco Enforcement Unit will visit at times pre-determined with hospitals and give verbal warnings and reminders to people who are smoking near hospital entrances. They're authorised to issue fines of \$300 if necessary.

"Patients who struggle with addiction to smoking are routinely prescribed nicotine replacement therapy to prevent the need to smoke. This is an important part of their treatment and aids recovery.

"Visitors to hospital should refrain from smoking on hospital grounds and should not smoke with the patient they are visiting.

"We offer assistance to staff who are struggling with smoking addiction and give staff members access to subsidised nicotine replacement therapy.

The District is one of three regions to participate in this pilot program, the other two being Sydney and Western Sydney Local Health Districts.

The Ministry of Health and participating Local Health Districts will assess outcomes from the pilot after nine months, before deciding how to strengthen compliance with smoke-free laws across NSW.

Staff, patients, friends and family can access the NSW Quitline (13 78 48) or www.iCanQuit.com.au for free advice and assistance to quit smoking.