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MORE THAN HALF OF ELIGIBLE WOMEN IN SOUTH WESTERN SYDNEY BEHIND IN BREAST SCREENING

This Breast Cancer Awareness Month, women aged 50-74 from South Western Sydney are being urged to book in a free mammogram, with 55.1 per cent of women in the region overdue for their two-yearly breast cancer screening.

Dr Patsy Soon, Clinical Director of BreastScreen NSW, South Western Sydney, said with 695 local women expected to be diagnosed with breast cancer this year, now is the time to book in a free, life-saving breast screen.

“For women aged 50-74, a breast screen every two years is still the best way to detect breast cancer early – before it can be seen or felt,” Dr Soon said.

“If you’re aged 50 – 74, make breast screening a priority. It only takes 20 minutes and no doctor’s referral is needed.”

Launched last month, a new BreastScreen NSW campaign “Breast Cancer Doesn’t Wait” encourages women to put themselves first. It was developed after research found many women were not having regular breast screens because they were too busy.

Professor Tracey O’Brien, NSW Chief Cancer Officer and CEO of the Cancer Institute NSW, said if detected in its earliest stages, a woman’s five-year breast cancer survival rate is 98 per cent. This drops to 43.9 per cent if detected later, when it has spread to other organs.

“Breast cancer is expected to take the lives of close to 1,000 women in NSW this year and we need to do everything we can to support women and encourage them to book in a life-saving breast screen,” Professor O’Brien said.

“Early detection not only significantly increases a person’s chance of survival it can also greatly reduce the need for invasive treatment like a mastectomy.

“As a working mum and professional, I know how hard it can be to block out time for yourself. Unfortunately, breast cancer doesn’t wait, so I encourage all eligible women to stop and put themselves first – for themselves and their family.”

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women, with one in seven women set to be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime. Age and being female are the biggest risk factors – not family history.

BreastScreen NSW services are recommended for women aged 50–74 years, with no breast symptoms.

The service is available for women from 40 years. Any woman who has noticed a change in their breasts, like a lump, should see their doctor without delay.

For more information and to make an appointment at a local BreastScreen NSW clinic or mobile van, call 13 20 50 from anywhere in Australia or book online at www.breastscreen.nsw.gov.au.