

Date: Monday 16 March 2015

NORTHERN SYDNEY HOSPITALS TO CLEAR THE AIR OF SMOKE

Smoking on the grounds of hospitals within Northern Sydney Local Health District (NSLHD) is closer to being a thing of the past.

On 23 March, NSLHD will introduce its Smoke-Free by-law under the NSW Smoke-free Environment Act to Royal North Shore Hospital, Ryde Hospital, Manly Hospital, Mona Vale Hospital and Hornsby Hospital.

Under the by-law, authorised inspectors can issue Penalty Infringement Notices (PINS) of \$300 to individuals who smoke while on hospital grounds.

Smoking has been banned on hospital sites since 2007. Since then, with the help of education campaigns, cessation support, removal of designated smoking zones and extensive no smoking signage, the rate of smoking on NSLHD grounds has fallen from 4.6 per cent to 1.5 per cent.

NSLHD Executive Director Operations, Dr Andrew Montague, said this was about valuing the health of staff, patients and visitors.

“Hospitals are a place for healing, and often people here are in vulnerable situations. We also encourage our community to embrace a healthy lifestyle, so any amount of smoking on our hospital campus does not correlate with that,” said Dr Montague.

“Introducing the Penalty Infringement Notices (PINS) may appear a tough measure, but our staff and community support us in reducing their exposure to cigarette smoke.

“Most people already understand that you just don’t smoke around hospitals,” he said.

Hospital security staff have undergone additional training to become authorised inspectors. They will apply a fair and compassionate approach and will also be educating people about their obligations under the smoke-free policy and by-law.

Patients who smoke can receive Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) to help with nicotine withdrawal symptoms, where clinically appropriate.

Hospital staff can also access counselling and four weeks free NRT per year.

Tobacco smoking is the greatest single cause of premature death and is a leading preventable cause of illness in New South Wales.

There is no safe level of smoking. NSLHD encourages all smokers to quit. Call the Quitline on 137848 or visit www.icanquit.com.au

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