

21 January, 2019

Local business fined for selling single cigarettes

Tobacco retailers in South Eastern Sydney are being warned that they may face heavy fines if they remove cigarettes from packaging and sell them individually.

The warning from South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD) comes after a tobacco retailer in Maroubra was fined for illegally selling single cigarettes to minors.

The fine was handed down on Thursday 10 January, 2019 at Waverley Local Court. Professor Mark Ferson, Director of the SESLHD Public Health Unit, said a tip-off by a member of the public led to the successful prosecution.

“Our Officers were alerted that a salesperson had been witnessed selling single cigarettes to students in school uniform. Officers then conducted a compliance check where they successfully purchased three cigarettes for \$3,” Professor Ferson said.

“Shops that sell single cigarettes are clearly inviting people, including minors, to smoke. For as little as \$1 each, single cigarettes are affordable to children, the most price-sensitive group of tobacco buyers. It also means that they do not see the graphic health warnings required on cigarette packs.”

Under the Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2008, it is an offence to sell single cigarettes, cigarettes in packets of less than 20 or tobacco products without appropriate health warnings. The maximum penalty for a first offence is \$11,000 for an individual, or \$55,000 in the case of a corporation.

“Compliance with the legislation is closely monitored. Authorised Officers from the Public Health Unit conduct random inspections and can issue warnings, fines or initiate prosecutions against retailers that break the law.”

The NSW Government is committed to reducing the prevalence of smoking and protecting people from second-hand smoke. It will invest more than \$13.5 million on tobacco control in 2018-19. This includes public awareness and education campaigns, quit smoking support, compliance and enforcement of smoke-free laws, and targeted programs for vulnerable groups.

NSW has seen a consistent downward trend in the prevalence of smoking with smoking among NSW adults decreasing from 22.5% in 2002 to 15% in 2016.

Pleasingly, fewer young people are smoking in general, with rates declining from 27.3 per cent in 1984 to 6.7 per cent in 2014.

All members of the community can help reduce children’s access to cigarettes and the sale of unbranded tobacco by reporting suspected breaches of the law to the Public Health Unit on 9382 8333 or to the Tobacco Information Line on 1800 357 412. All complaints are dealt with confidentially.

For help quitting smoking, visit icanquit.com.au or call the Quitline on 13 78 48.