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Helping everyone to breathe easier – health staff support new smoking laws

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District staff will be out and about during the month of May raising awareness of the recently introduced changes to the *Smoke Free Environments Act 2000*.

The new smoking laws prohibit smoking in a range of outdoor spaces which now include: within 10 metres of playgrounds; in spectator areas of sporting fields; at transport stops, including train stations and bus stops, and within four metres of entrances to public buildings.

Julie Dixon, Director of Planning and Population Health, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, said smoking-related illness accounts for around 5,200 deaths and 44,000 hospitalisations every year in NSW and continues to contribute to years of debilitating illnesses and substantial costs to the public healthcare system.

“Taking steps to limit people’s exposure to second-hand smoke in outdoor public places is a key step in efforts to minimise tobacco smoking in our society,” Ms Dixon said.

“These new smoking bans will contribute to decreasing community smoking and improve the safety and health of our important shared community spaces.”

Health staff will visit a range of playgrounds, sporting fields, transport stops and public buildings throughout the South East of Sydney monitoring the areas to identify levels of community compliance with the new laws, and provide information to people at the sites to increase community awareness of the new laws.

“We want to ensure the community has a good understanding of the laws and can work together with health services to ensure these public places are healthy for all,” Ms Dixon said.

“The ban on smoking in public places will be extended to commercial outdoor dining areas in licensed premises, restaurants and cafes from July 2015.”

Enquiries in relation to the new laws can be directed to the Tobacco Information Line on 1800 357 412.

Anyone wishing to quit smoking should contact the NSW Quitline on 13 78 48.

Information on the smoke free reforms can be found at:

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/tobacco/Pages/smokefree-areas-faq.aspx>

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