

23 October 2018

## **290 women in South Eastern Sydney with undiagnosed breast cancer**

As many as 290 women in the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District have breast cancer but don't know it because they haven't had a mammogram in the past two years.

The data, released by the Cancer Institute NSW during Breast Cancer Awareness Month, also shows 45,895 women aged 50 to 74 in the South Eastern Sydney region are either overdue for a mammogram or have never had one.

Robyn Schubert, BreastScreen NSW, Director South Eastern Sydney Illawarra, said she hopes the data will encourage all women aged 50 to 74 to have a potentially life-saving mammogram and make simple lifestyle changes to reduce their breast cancer risk.

"Encouragingly, overall screening numbers across the state are on the rise, which shows our lifesaving message is getting across," Ms Schubert said.

"However, each year 950 women in NSW die from breast cancer and our data shows 45,895 women locally are not attending their recommended two-yearly mammograms.

"Women tend to have a perception breast cancer is common, but don't think it will happen to them. That's why it can be easy to forget to schedule a mammogram or not make it a priority.

"Mammograms are the best way to detect breast cancer before it can be seen or felt, which allows for less invasive treatment and better recovery. They're also free of charge," Ms Schubert said.

Ways to reduce your breast cancer risk:

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Exercise regularly.
- Reduce alcohol intake.
- Quit smoking.

Since 1 July 2015, the Cancer Institute NSW has invested more than \$4 million on public awareness and education campaigns for breast cancer screening, and awarded more than \$2.5 million to local community, health and primary care organisations to promote breast cancer screening.

In 2018-19, more than \$7 million is being invested towards the South Eastern Sydney Illawarra BreastScreen Screening and Assessment Service.

Breast screening participation rates are driven by many factors, including population growth and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, which have lower rates of screening than the general population.

The Cancer Institute NSW targets these communities through various partnerships, services and funding, including \$700,000 since 2016 to improve breast screening participation among CALD women.

In addition to 46 BreastScreen sites, BreastScreen NSW has 16 mobile vans that provide services to about 180 locations across NSW, specifically in rural and remote areas.

To book a mammogram today with BreastScreen NSW, please phone 13 20 50. You can search for your nearest BreastScreen NSW service by visiting [breastscreen.nsw.gov.au](http://breastscreen.nsw.gov.au)