

Fresh Air campaign aims to end smoking in Aboriginal community

Wentworth Healthcare has used World No Tobacco Day (Friday 31 May) to launch an innovative new campaign that focuses on holistic wellbeing and connection to country as the motivation to reduce smoking rather than using negative images of ill-health.

The Breath of Fresh Air campaign, funded by Cancer Institute NSW, aims to reduce the high rates of tobacco use in the Aboriginal community in the Nepean Blue Mountains region of NSW (Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, Lithgow & Penrith).

The campaign is believed to be one of the first anti-smoking campaigns that offers a positive approach to tobacco control marketing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Using the tag line “I Choose Fresh Air,” it uses art and cultural concepts and draws on prominent members of the local Aboriginal community such as Tyran Liddiard; first grade cricketer at Penrith Cricket Club, Krystal Mervin; Darug woman, Granddaughter of Aunty Edna Watson - prominent Indigenous Elder, Donna Jory; Aboriginal Health Worker Mootang Tarimi Bus at Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District and Tai Tuivasa; Aboriginal UFC fighter, top 10 heavyweight division globally.

Wentworth Healthcare CEO, Lizz Reay, said, “current tobacco control initiatives may not be effectively engaging Aboriginal people.”

“Across the general population smoking rates are decreasing however within the Aboriginal community the already significantly higher rate is increasing (Aboriginal people 39.7%; general population 11.6%).”

“We aim to provide hope for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by empowering them to improve their social and emotional well-being through tobacco reduction and/or cessation,” she said.

The campaign features the Koori Quitline (13 78 48, a culturally-sensitive, free and confidential telephone service to people to quit smoking). The service provides tips on how to help develop a quit plan, manage cravings and provides information on quit-smoking medications.

At the Breath of Fresh Air launch, Wentworth Healthcare used Reconciliation Week (27 May – 3 June) to publicly release their Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Approved and endorsed by Reconciliation Australia, the RAP will ensure a dedicated and accountable focus on activities and initiatives that contribute to improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the community.

“Our organisation has a strong history of collaborating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities within our region, and this RAP formalises our commitment to continue to work together, to build communities of healthcare practice that support and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people” said Ms Reay.

“It also recognises that Reconciliation is an ongoing journey that requires tangible plans to embed the needs of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community into our everyday business and culture.”

The launch will also feature guest speakers, entertainment by local Aboriginal Dance Group - *Wagana Aboriginal Dancers* & Indigenous food tastings by Mirritya Mundy Indigenous Twist Catering.

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