



Helping others to quit the habit

Locals participated in the free SmokeCheck training workshop at the Powerhouse Hotel on Thursday, April 22.

The smoking rate among Aboriginal Australians is more than double that of non-Aboriginal people and the prevalence of smoking among Aboriginal people has not reduced over the past decade. In NSW, 43.2 per cent of Aboriginal adults were current smokers, compared to 18.4 per cent of the general population (2002-2005 Report on Adult Aboriginal Health from the New South Wales Population Health Survey and NSW Health the 2008 New South Wales Population Health Survey).

"The high rate of smoking in our Aboriginal communities is alarming," says Luciana Massi, SmokeCheck's senior trainer.

As part of the NSW Government commitment to

reducing the prevalence of smoking in the NSW community, the NSW Department of Health has developed an Aboriginal tobacco prevention project called SmokeCheck.

The SmokeCheck program aims to train all NSW Aboriginal health workers and other health professionals who provide care for Aboriginal people to encourage their clients who smoke to quit.

"The SmokeCheck training program has been developed specifically for Aboriginal people," Ms Massi said.

The provision of smoking cessation training in NSW also aligns with the Australian Government in tackling tobacco smoking among Aboriginal communities.

"Smoking is contributing to high mortality rates and is a major contributor to serious illnesses such as cardiovascular disease,

cancer and diabetes," Ms Massi said.

Reducing the high rates of tobacco smoking among the Aboriginal population will help to close the 17-year life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

The NSW SmokeCheck Project is based at the University of Sydney and funded jointly by the NSW Department of Health and the Cancer Institute NSW.

Ms Massi explains: "Each time a client comes to the health service they may not have thought about giving up, but the SmokeCheck intervention encourages them to think about why they smoke.

"The health worker then uses the culturally specific resources to support their client in quitting and the conversation can be revisited at future visits," says Ms Massi.



Participants in Tamworth's SmokeCheck workshop last month.