



New program to target Indigenous smokers

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In an attempt to improve the health of the people of NSW, a project has been developed to target Australian Aboriginals who smoke.

As part of the NSW Tobacco Action Plan, the NSW Department of Health has created the NSW 'SmokeCheck' project and is commissioned by The University of Sydney to undertake its development, implementation and evaluation.

SmokeCheck senior trainer Luciana Massi said the smoking rate among Aborigines was more than double that of non-Indigenous people and the prevalence of smoking among Aboriginal people had not reduced during the past decade.

"The high rate of smoking in our Aboriginal communities is alarming," she said.

"The 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.

"In NSW, 43.2 per cent of Aboriginal adults are current smokers, compared to 18.4 per cent of the general population."

Local Aboriginal health workers gathered for the program on Tuesday to cover topics such as understanding the health, social and cultural effects of tobacco use in Aboriginal communities and how to provide advice to support their clients in quitting smoking.

"Smoking is contributing

to the high mortality rates and is a major contributor to serious illness 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.

"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."

After the training day, the health worker will then use the culturally specific resources they learned about to support their client in quitting.



The local Aboriginal health workers and TAFE students who successfully participated in the training on the day.