

THE SMOKE FREE STORY

How and why Barwon Health has become smoke free

Healthcare services have an obligation to address smoking within their facilities and to show leadership in reducing the health impact of smoking in the wider community.

On July 1st 2006 Barwon Health, Victoria's largest regional healthcare provider, introduced a Totally Smoke Free environment, prohibiting smoking within the boundaries of all its sites. The policy is an important step in an ongoing project, which aims to achieve health benefits for staff, patients/clients and visitors alike, and to ensure Barwon Health meets its obligations to these groups and the wider community.

WHY SHOULD WE PREVENT ETS EXPOSURE?

Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS) is a Class A Carcinogen (cancer causing agent). This means there is no safe level of exposure. It is estimated that 11 people who have never smoked die each year in Australia due to ETS exposure. ETS exposure can:

- cause or worsen many kinds of cancer as well as heart disease, bronchitis and other respiratory diseases;
- begin the process of atherosclerosis (narrowing of the arteries that leads to heart disease); and
- increase the likelihood of non-smokers developing lung cancer by 20 to 30 per cent.

Brennan P et al. Secondhand smoke exposure in adulthood and risk of lung cancer among never smoker: A pooled analysis of two large studies. *International Journal of Cancer*. 109(1); 125-131.

A healthy environment

An important goal has been to establish a totally smoke-free environment at all Barwon Health facilities. These number more than 20 across the region and include acute care and rehabilitation as well as residential aged care, mental health and community health facilities.

The project has achieved a stepwise introduction of smoking restrictions, commencing with designated outdoor smoking areas in December 2004, and moving to a totally smoke free environment from July 1st 2006. The needs of patients/clients with acute mental illness and those in residential care have been accommodated with limited exemptions and individual arrangements.

Help for smokers

The policy is not just about restricting smoking, it's about actively seeking opportunities to reduce the impact of smoking in the community. An important feature of the policy is therefore the introduction of measures to manage nicotine dependence for all Barwon Health clients. This is the focus of current efforts throughout inpatient and ambulatory

care services. (For more information on these activities see IMPLEMENTATION STATUS)

Staff are also well supported through individual counseling and subsidised Nicotine Replacement Therapy. These services are provided via StaffCare, a dedicated employee health department within Barwon Health.

Consultation has been extensive in order to ensure buy-in from all stakeholders. The SmokeFree Steering Committee oversees the policy development and implementation.

Barwon Smokefree Policy - Development timeframes

