

Media Release

From: Jill Stringer, Communications Advisor

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Subject: Smokefree DHB

Wairarapa DHB goes smokefree in all buildings grounds and vehicles today, World Smokefree day. "We see this as a really positive move for the DHB," says communications advisor Jill Stringer. "All other DHBs in the country have either gone smokefree already, or will do so before the end of the year. Many are, like us, choosing World Smokefree Day on May 31 to mark the change."

The 'smokefree project' has been several months in the planning. All staff were surveyed to find out how many were smokers, how many wanted to give up, and to test general attitudes to creating a smokefree environment, before a policy was finalised.

"We tended to fit the national picture of 17-25% of the workforce being current smokers," says Ms Stringer. "A big surprise was the large number of ex-smokers on staff. Clear trends were identified about the need for good signage, information for people coming in to hospital, and support for staff who want to quit smoking".

In preparation for World Smokefree day, signage is being put up around the hospital, and an advertising campaign is running in the newspaper and on radio. Brochures have been printed for patients and visitors, with advice about where to seek stop-smoking or smoking reduction advice.

There has also been a special promotion aimed at staff and visitors. Tracey Towns from Whaiora Whanui and Denise Allen from Choice Health have visited the one remaining designated smoking area at Masterton Hospital (which disappears today) over the last few weeks to distribute 'goody bags' containing quit smoking information and various smoke-free merchandise. Even some non-smoking staff and visitors just out enjoying the sunshine were given packs, and asked to pass them on to friends who smoke.

"The theme for this year's promotion is 'take the smoke outside,'" says Denise. "We thought we'd do this promotion to thank people for doing just that, and provide support information for anyone who might want to reduce or quit smoking".

"We are taking an educative approach to introducing a smokefree environment," says Ms Stringer. "It's important to remember that it's tobacco that is the problem, not the smoker."

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