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## **150 women in Illawarra Shoalhaven with undiagnosed breast cancer**

As many as 150 women in Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District have breast cancer but don't know it because they haven't had a mammogram in the past two years.

The data, released by the Cancer Institute NSW during Breast Cancer Awareness Month, also shows 23,424 women aged 50 to 74 in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven are either overdue for a mammogram or have never had one.

BreastScreen South Eastern Sydney Illawarra Director, Robyn Schubert said she hopes the data will encourage all women aged 50 to 74 to have a potentially life-saving mammogram and make simple lifestyle changes to reduce their breast cancer risk.

"Encouragingly, overall screening numbers across the state are on the rise, which shows our lifesaving message is getting across," Ms Schubert said.

"However, each year 950 women in NSW die from breast cancer and our data shows around 23,000 women locally are not attending their recommended two-yearly mammograms.

"Women tend to have a perception breast cancer is common, but don't think it will happen to them. That's why it can be easy to forget to schedule a mammogram or not make it a priority.

"Mammograms are the best way to detect breast cancer before it can be seen or felt, which allows for less invasive treatment and better recovery. They're also free of charge," she said.

Ways to reduce your breast cancer risk include maintaining a healthy weight, exercising regularly, reducing alcohol intake and quitting smoking.

Since 1 July 2015, the Cancer Institute NSW has invested more than \$4 million on public awareness and education campaigns for breast cancer screening, and awarded more than \$2.5 million to local community, health and primary care organisations to promote breast cancer screening.

Breast screening participation rates are driven by many factors, including population growth and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, which have lower rates of screening than the general population.

The Cancer Institute NSW targets these communities through various partnerships, services and funding, including \$700,000 since 2016 to improve breast screening participation among CALD women.

In addition to 46 BreastScreen sites, BreastScreen NSW has 16 mobile vans that provide services to about 180 locations across NSW, specifically in rural and remote areas. To book a mammogram today with BreastScreen NSW, please phone 13 20 50. You can search for your nearest BreastScreen NSW service by visiting [breastscreen.nsw.gov.au](http://breastscreen.nsw.gov.au)

### **Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District**

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