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Northern region DHBs swap foam cups for biodegradable alternative

Auckland, New Zealand – Environmentally-friendly biodegradable paper cups are being rolled out in public hospitals across Auckland and Northland after being successfully trialled at Waitematā DHB.

Existing Styrofoam foam cups, which are limited to single use and take around one million years to break down in landfill, are being replaced with the biodegradable alternative as existing stocks run out.

Waitematā was the first of the northern DHBs to switch to a commercially compostable paper cup in 2017.

Now healthAlliance FPSC, a provider of non-clinical services to northern DHBs, is following Waitematā's lead and has procured the cups for use at Auckland, Counties Manukau and Northland as well.

The new cups are purposefully designed and created to meet the DHBs' specific needs, while remaining a cost-effective solution.

They will reduce non-biodegradable hospital waste to landfill by 200 cubic metres per annum across the region; the equivalent of more than 36,000 World Cup soccer balls.

"The need to reduce our impact on the environment has grown substantially. It calls for us to be innovative in our approach to procuring fast-moving consumables while working within the DHBs' budget constraints," said Stephen Coombe, General Manager Commercial Services, healthAlliance FPSC.

Waitematā DHB is pleased to see the region collaborating on shared sustainability goals.

"Each time we seek a quote or tender is an opportunity to pursue the best possible sustainable and economically viable outcome," said Waitemata DHB Sustainability Manager Michelle Dawson.

"Shared procurement arrangements mean that ideas from all staff across the northern region can be explored and rolled out for the benefit of everyone.

"Sustainable procurement, carbon and transport initiatives and waste management are just some of the areas where we are minimising harm and maximising sustainability efficiency across the region."

Clare Thompson CEO healthAlliance FPSC explains that working together as a region, we can make a bigger impact at a lower cost when it comes to sustainable procurement.

"As a shared service organisation, we need to leverage our expertise in areas like procurement to benefit the region as a whole when it comes to transitioning to sustainable solutions, while minimising financial impact," said Clare Thompson.

Transition to the new product has taken place across all four DHBs, with sustainability teams working to complete the rollout and collection initiatives.

healthAlliance (FPSC) Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of healthAlliance New Zealand Limited, providing shared services across finance, procurement and supply chain to the northern region District Health Boards.

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