



Wednesday March 23 2016

Far North District Council takes pro-active stance in supporting employee health

Far North District Council is leading the charge in supporting the health of its employees and providing healthy workplace measures.

Dr Tom Mulholland, or 'Dr Tom' – an Auckland-based emergency doctor who has made it his personal crusade to save people from preventable chronic diseases – has been touring key Far North sites in recent weeks, including Council offices and public spaces. His mission has been to offer free health checks which primarily test pre-diabetic risk and heart health.

Seeing an average of 20 people per day, Dr Tom says the checks – which include testing of blood lipids, diabetes testing (HBA1C) which can indicate pre-diabetic risk, blood pressure and lung function – have signalled abnormal results in approximately half of the people he has seen.

Healthy Families Far North – a Ministry of Health initiative charged with improving population health in the Far North – has been instrumental in connecting Dr Tom with Far North District Council staff so as to offer people the opportunity to gauge their vital health statistics.

"It's voluntary to turn up here, so people aren't coming because they're sick. It's like a wellness model and people are really grateful that we're here. It's non-threatening and non-judgemental. We're like 'these are the numbers and these are the warning lights you need to take note of'," Dr Tom says.

Rates rebate officer Lorraine Harre says her consultation has provided her with valuable insights into the state of her physical health. "I've never had a diabetes or heart check before and it was brilliant. It was nice getting things confirmed and it puts your mind at ease," she says.

Far North District Council does not have a specific staff wellbeing policy. However, it promotes the wellbeing of its employees by providing flu vaccinations, workplace assessments for ergonomics, an internal website page for Council staff on wellbeing topics, inter-departmental sport activities and employee walking groups during lunchtimes.

Council Chief Executive Officer (Acting) Colin Dale says Council staff appreciated the chance to have a consultation with Dr Tom.

"The Council employs more than 300 staff across the District. Dr Tom reminds us we can't take good health for granted. Everyone should take care of themselves and have regular check-ups, including me."



Mr Dale says staff are looking forward to Dr Tom's next visit to Council.