

Sunbury trials smoke ban

By Matt Crossman

A trial ban of smoking in the O'Shanassy Street restaurant precinct could be the first step towards a smoke-free Sunbury, a Hume councillor believes.

Sunbury-based councillor Jack Medcraft said the wheel of public opinion had turned and most residents would support bans on people lighting up in public areas.

"The fact is smoking kills people and passive smoking is a huge concern," he said.

The east side of O'Shanassy Street will

be smoke free between Station and Brook streets for a year from April 4, after the council approved a proposal led by Sunbury Community Health (SCH), Sunbury Business Association and traders last week.

Those who refuse to butt out will face fines of up to \$200.

A survey of more than 150 people last year found 88.5 per cent supported the trial ban.

Cr Medcraft said extending the ban across the town centre would be a big step, but the support was there.

"We would cop flak over it from some people

... but the survey with the O'Shanassy Street proposal showed the community is saying that if you want to smoke, go to another spot. Enjoy your cigarette, but don't share it with us."

Cr Medcraft said people regularly complained about high levels of smoking outside the town's shopping centres.

"They just want to be able to walk into a shopping centre and not have to go through a wall of smoke," he said.

SCH's 'building healthy communities' executive manager Bernie Hetherington has no doubt the trial will be successful.

"We're hopeful it will lead to permanent measures, which could include other areas," she said.

Vic's Food and Wine owner Vic Scerri expects the ban will have a positive effect on trade.

"There's nothing worse than trying to eat and getting a puff of smoke in your face," he said. "Customers are rapt they will be able to eat in a smoke-free environment."

Mayor Helen Patsikatheodorou said council officers would continually evaluate the trial. "We're keen to know what people think."