

26 November, 2013

WORLD AIDS DAY

Through the remarkable advances in HIV testing, and treatment and continued promotion of safe sexual behaviour, we now have the means to achieve a significant reduction in the transmission of HIV and provide better management and support to those infected.

World AIDS Day, observed every year on 1 December, provides an important opportunity to raise awareness about HIV and AIDS.

NSW has a strong track record of achievement in preventing the spread of HIV and has set an ambitious target of virtually eliminating HIV transmission by 2020.

HIV affects people of all ages, genders and cultures with 14% of notifications in NSW in 2012 from heterosexual contact. Currently, up to 15,000 people are estimated to be living with HIV in NSW.

In 2012, there was a rise in HIV notifications in NSW, with 409 new diagnoses in NSW residents, compared with 330 in 2011.

ENDING HIV is the NSW campaign that rallies individuals, government, health services and the medical profession to actively communicate the 'Get Tested' and 'Know Your Status' messages.

"The most effective way for people to protect themselves and their partners in reducing the spread of HIV is to consistently use condoms with sexual partners and have regular HIV and STI testing," said Dr Josephine Lusk, Director of Short Street Sexual Health Clinic.

"Due to the development of testing, testing is now faster and easier than ever before and it's confidential. The earlier you know your HIV status and the quicker you see a doctor, the more effective treatment options will be."

Treatment today is now simpler with less side effects. Antiviral treatment not only improves health and life expectancy but also dramatically reduces the risk of passing on HIV to others.

"Safe is the best way to play. We'd advise people to use condoms, always use sterile injecting equipment, and be extra careful in risky situations" Dr Lusk said.

As part of World AIDS Day 2013, organisations are holding events to increase community awareness about HIV.

Local events in the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (south) include:

- "Red Ribbon Boa" - picture campaign. Project Youth Inc, Sutherland Shire will be at Cronulla Beach on the 1 December using peer educators to engage young people in conversations around HIV, using quizzes and chatterboxes. They will have a virtual photo booth and encourage youth and others to have their photo taken wearing a red feather boa (referencing red ribbons) and holding a sign for the photo to then share via their own social media sites. Participants will receive a red slushie! They are also seeking council buildings /

the Engadine Community Services Building will be lit red as part of NSW's paint the town red campaign.

- St George Youth Services - peer educators will be out and about in Hurstville to engage young people in conversations around HIV, increase knowledge, and reduce stigma.
- Pole Depot Community Centre - Penshurst. World AIDS Day stall on 1 December as part of the centre's Social Inclusion Fair Day. This will include an HIV Positive Speaker who will be talking about her experience of living with HIV. Our local area has a high proportion of people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds. This event aims to start conversations about HIV in a community where such topics may be taboo, reduce stigma and discrimination towards people living with HIV and encourage social inclusion and connection for people of all cultures, religions and sexualities.
- An HIV Testing Card has been developed by the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District's HIV/AIDS and Related Programs Unit. The card lists clinics in the local area that provide HIV testing, with contact details and opening hours. The cards are available free from local venues as part of the World AIDS Day 2013.
- South Eastern Sydney Local Health District is also supporting Australia's first pop up HIV rapid testing site in Sydney's Taylor Square.

Please contact Media and Communications Officer Maxine Brennan (details below) if you would like more information on, or to attend, any of these events.

On World AIDS Day, 1 December, people in NSW are being asked to show their support for those living with HIV, by wearing a red ribbon.

Further information about the NSW Health campaign to End HIV can be found at www.health.nsw.gov.au/endinghiv

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District

Media contact: Maxine Brennan, 0413 028 776

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