

24 November, 2015

## Ending HIV - Test Often, Treat Early and Prevent World AIDS Day 2015

NSW has made significant progress in increasing HIV testing, treatment uptake among people with diagnosed HIV and strengthening prevention efforts, although it is estimated that around 14 per cent of people with HIV are undiagnosed.

World AIDS Day, on 1 December, provides an important opportunity for us to remember those who have lost their lives to HIV and AIDS and to show support for people living with HIV.

To further promote awareness about HIV and AIDS, AIDS Awareness Week, 24–30 November, will focus on promoting HIV testing. More people are testing and accessing support services than ever before, but there's still more work to be done to ensure timely diagnoses and enable access to early treatment uptake, highlighting the need for people to have an HIV test more often.

Dr Josephine Lusk, Director, Short Street Sexual Health Centre, at St George Hospital, said HIV testing is easier and more accessible than ever before. HIV can affect people of all ages, genders, races, and cultures.

“The most effective way for people to protect themselves and their partners is to consistently use condoms with sexual partners and have regular HIV and STI testing,” Dr Lusk said.

“HIV testing leads to early detection and allows early uptake of treatment, which improves individual health and prevents transmission to others.”

Early treatment is a key to an effective response to HIV. Most people receiving treatment in Australia have a similar life expectancy to people without HIV. In NSW, over 90% of people with HIV attending public HIV and sexual health clinics are now on treatment.

World AIDS Day is an opportunity to address the HIV-related stigma that still persists in Australia, which causes social isolation for many people living with HIV and undermines prevention, testing and treatment efforts.

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SESLHD will be supporting the following local events for World AIDS Day within the St George and Sutherland Shire region, to increase community awareness about HIV prevention testing as well as support for those living with HIV:

- **Monday 30 November to Wednesday 4 December:** Kogarah Library will host an information stall and HIV timeline, with two Waratah Clinic staff available for two hours each day to answer questions.
- **Tuesday 1 December from 9am to 12noon:** An information stall will be held in the St George Hospital foyer, Gray St entrance, with resources and raffle prizes.
- **Tuesday 1 December from 1.30pm to 4pm:** A HIV seminar will be held in the St George Hospital Education Building, 4 South St, Kogarah, with presentations by Waratah Clinic staff as well as representatives from Positive Life NSW who will share their experiences of living with HIV. Light lunch/afternoon provided. Bookings: John Coady, 9113 2959.
- **Tuesday 1 December from 8am to 12noon:** An information stall, HIV and BBV testing will be offered to registered clients of the St George Drug and Alcohol Service in South St, Kogarah.

For information on World AIDS Day, visit: [www.worldaidsday.org.au](http://www.worldaidsday.org.au)

For information on HIV and HIV testing, visit:

[http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/HIV\\_AIDS.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/HIV_AIDS.aspx)

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