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SOUTH EASTERN SYDNEY LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT TARGETS ST GEORGE REGION FOR HIV TESTING WEEK

More than 10,500 people in NSW have been diagnosed with HIV infection and over 16,000 people in NSW have been infected with HIV. Statistics South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD) is striving to change.

In an effort to raise awareness of HIV testing and to encourage people to know their HIV status, SESLHD will be hosting **HIV Testing Week during 1 – 7 June 2015**.

During HIV Testing Week, SESLHD will be targeting the St George region, with particular emphasis on including people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

The *NSW Ending HIV Strategy* identifies people from CALD communities as more likely to receive a late HIV diagnosis, have poorer knowledge of HIV, where they can access HIV testing services and show apprehension in receiving test results.

One of the largest group of people born in a non-English speaking country within the South Eastern Sydney region are people from China (38,172), with 65 per cent of this population (24,646) living in the St George region.

Director of the Short Street Centre Sexual Health Clinic at St George Hospital, Dr Josephine Lusk, said that in the *NSW Ending HIV Strategy*, people from CALD backgrounds, in addition to gay and homosexually-active men, are identified as one of the priority populations for HIV awareness, testing and treatment.

“During HIV Testing Week, we are raising awareness of the importance of HIV testing, knowing your HIV status, treating HIV early and encouraging the local community and others who are at risk to have an HIV test,” Dr Lusk said.

Getting an HIV test is now easier and faster than ever before through a range of high quality and innovative HIV testing services; including free sexual health clinics, rapid HIV testing for high risk groups, pop-up and express clinics and results by SMS. People can also request a test at their GP.

Dr Lusk said the majority of new HIV infections reported in NSW in 2014 were in gay and homosexually-active men at 79 per cent, with heterosexual cases accounting for 14 per cent.

“As well as gay and homosexually active men, heterosexual people who may be at risk of HIV should be tested. This might include anyone who has changed partners recently or had unprotected sex,” she said.

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During HIV Testing Week a SESLHD pop-up rapid HIV testing bus will be parked at King Street Mall in Rockdale, with health workers offering rapid HIV tests and information to promote HIV testing amongst the local community from 1 – 5 June, 12.30pm to 3.30pm daily.

There will also be banners, bus posters and information available promoting HIV Testing Week and HIV testing throughout the Rockdale LGA.

To find out where to get an HIV test, see:

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/sexualhealth/pages/sexual-health-clinics.aspx> or call the NSW Sexual Health Infolink on: 1800 451 624, for free and confidential sexual health support and information.

For more information on HIV testing, treatment and prevention, see:

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/endinghiv>