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New sexual health network to support LGBTI communities

A new state-wide association of sexual health counsellors has been launched.

Called the Sexual Health Counsellors Association of NSW - or SCAN for short - the network hopes to improve access to sexual health counselling in public health clinics for those LGBTI (people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and/or intersex) community members at risk of HIV or other STIs.

Sexual health counselling is a specialised field, and within NSW Health includes professionals from a range of disciplines, such as social work, counselling and clinical psychology.

It was identified that LGBTI community members sometimes find it difficult to find services where they can discuss their sexual health needs in a frank and open way, without judgement or stigma.

Network chair, Brendan Crozier, said SCAN was established to advocate for the improvement of the psychological and social functioning of LGBTI people, particularly with regard to their sexual health needs.

“SCAN is made up of counsellors throughout NSW, from Wollongong to Coffs Harbour. Many rural areas lack specialist public counselling services, and the association will advocate with NSW Health to address these gaps,” Mr Crozier said.

“The NSW HIV strategy highlights the importance of psychosocial support and counselling support services in linking people with diagnosed HIV with care and retained them in care over time. This group will provide opportunities to fulfil these needs and provide a more cohesive service across professions and across NSW.”

In future, SCAN hopes to collaborate on projects that will improve the quality of LGBTI people’s sex lives.