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For immediate release



Media Release

Mixed News on HIV

Data released today at the Australasian HIV/AIDS Conference in Brisbane, shows that a significant minority of gay men in Queensland continue to participate in behaviours that may place themselves or their partners at risk of HIV transmission.

New surveillance data also show that 166 Queenslanders tested positive for HIV in 2008, the same number as in 2007 (see http://www.health.qld.gov.au/sexhealth/publication_policy.asp).

While there has been an increase in risk behaviours since 2004 among Queensland gay men, this has generally brought them in line with the behaviour of gay men in other states.

Of particular concern for Queensland men are increasing rates of anal intercourse without condoms among casual partners, and a higher rate of unprotected sex between sero-discordant partners (where one is HIV positive and the other HIV negative).

However it is encouraging to see increasing rates of testing for HIV, more comprehensive testing for STIs (sexually transmissible infections) and increased knowledge of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). There are also more gay men living with HIV on anti-retroviral therapy and with an undetectable viral load.

“QAHC continues to encourage all people who are sexually active to take personal responsibility for not passing on or picking up HIV and other sexually transmissible infections” said Paul Martin, QAHC General Manager.

“This responsibility however must be supported by equal rights. Gay men are not equal before the law in Queensland and do not have equitable access to needed services.”

QAHC acknowledges the extra funding made available to HIV services by the state government, starting in 2008/09, including an additional \$600,000 to QAHC. It should be noted that the data reported above predates this extra investment of resources.

“We call on the government to support programs that promote the social inclusion of gay men (and the wider LGBT community), including community development, anti-stigma, discrimination & violence campaigns and mental health promotion. HIV prevention activities can only be successful if they exist within a wider program of promoting equality, access and inclusion.”

In the past 12 months QAHC has launched a range of new projects including:

- the high profile 'Rip & Roll' condom promotion campaign
- the relaunch of the popular 'Condoman' character
- an expanded program of sexual health and related workshops for gay men
- the introduction of free condom & lube dispensers in gay venues
- a state-wide consultation on the mental health and alcohol, tobacco and other drugs needs of LGBT Queenslanders

For further information or to arrange an interview contact Paul Martin, General Manager on 07 3017 1791, 0407 376 540 or pmartin@qahc.org.au

The Queensland Association for Healthy Communities (formerly Queensland AIDS Council) is a community based organisation which promotes the health of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Queenslanders.