

Media Release

Call for multi-party election guarantees for HIV

For this World AIDS Day, Healthy Communities* calls on all parties preparing to contest the upcoming Queensland election to commit to sufficient funding for government and non-government medical and HIV community based agencies.

Multi-party support for Queensland's near 30 year struggle to limit the spread and impact of HIV isn't an option but a necessity.

'No one wants to get or pass on HIV, said Chris Clementson, Sexual Health Manager for Healthy Communities.

This World AIDS Day is the time to guarantee the political leadership needed to keep our eyes on the current lived experience of HIV. To keep HIV prevention activities effective, prevention activities need to be relevant. To keep our variety of Queensland clinical services top notch, bi-partisan political will is required.'

While treatments for people living with HIV (PLHIV) are proving successful in slowing this disease, there is still no cure in sight. More people are being diagnosed with HIV than ever before. Of the 206 Queensland people diagnosed in 2010, over half (63%) occurred amongst gay men and other men who have sex with men.

Nearly 3,500 PLHIV are estimated to be living in Queensland. Premature ageing is an issue that those with a HIV diagnosis are confronting daily as well as the stigma and discrimination that has long plagued PLHIV in their social and sex lives.#

Gay men remain the group most impacted by HIV. Some already deal with the challenges of living with HIV while others keep dealing with the fact that sex places them at risk. To limit the spread of HIV in Queensland, Healthy Communities focuses on key prevention messages:

- Condom use as the best HIV prevention method
- For men not using condoms, other non-condom strategies to reduce (but not eliminate) HIV risk
- Regular sexual health testing to stay aware of HIV and STI status
- Lived experience of HIV now, to learn from the changes in this HIV epidemic

Clementson concluded, *'HIV NGOs have produced a commitments paper for candidates and Parties. Political will is best guaranteed by bi-partisan support for ongoing funding and the decision to never make HIV a political football.'*#

For further information or to arrange an interview contact Chris Clementson, Sexual Health Program Manager on 07 3017 1735, 0407 202 275 or cclementson@qahc.org.au

For a summary of key HIV issues go to our HIV commitments election paper produced with other NGOs and click www.healthycommunities.org.au/speakout

* Healthy Communities is a community based, health promotion charity working with and for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities in Queensland (previously the Queensland AIDS Council).