29 November 2012

30 years of HIV/AIDS in Australia – HIV is still in NSW

The Sydney Local Health District will support World AIDS Day (1 December 2012) with an information booth and resources to help raise awareness that HIV – the virus that can lead to AIDS – is still very much here after first being identified 30 years ago.

The SLHD will host an information booth at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital foyer tomorrow. The event aims to increase community awareness of HIV and elicit positive change on attitudes and behaviours towards HIV/AIDS and people with HIV.

HIV can affect people of all ages, genders, races and cultures. World AIDS Day, observed annually on 1 December, provides an important opportunity to raise awareness about HIV and AIDS.

Sydney Local Health District Director of Sexual Health Associate Professor Catherine O’Connor said the support of the whole community was needed to overcome HIV.

“There is a need to combat HIV itself and cultural factors like stigma and discrimination in the workplace, in health care settings, schools, families and communities. Due to improved treatments, people living with HIV are living longer and healthier lives, but there is still no cure for HIV,” Associate Professor O’Connor said.

“In NSW, there were more than 300 new cases of HIV infection diagnosed each year and about 10,000 people living with HIV. Many lead productive fulfilling lives, but continue to experience HIV related stigma and discrimination.

“The most effective way for people to protect themselves and their partners in reducing the spread of HIV was to consistently use condoms with sexual partners and have regular HIV and STI tests,” she said.

About World AIDS Day

Twenty years ago, a small group of New York artists created a simple design which is now one of the most recognised symbols worldwide – the red ribbon.

The World AIDS Day red ribbon is now worn to show support and solidarity for the millions of people living with HIV and AIDS – with this year marking 30 years of HIV/AIDS in Australia.

On World AIDS Day, 1 December, people in NSW are being asked to show their support for those living with HIV, by wearing a red ribbon.

For information on World AIDS Day go to www.worldaidsday.org.au

For more information, or to attend the event, please contact Caline Haddad from the Sydney Local Health District at sydneymedia@sswhs.nsw.gov.au or (02) 9515 9607.