Celebrate World Aids Day at Waterloo

Waterloo and Redfern residents are encouraged to celebrate World Aids Day (1 December) at Waterloo Neighbourhood Centre on December 5.

The HIV Awareness Day will include free chlamydia and gonorrhoea testing and the opportunity for visitors to hear a personal account from someone living with HIV. Complimentary lunch and drinks will also be provided.

Sydney Local Health District Health’s Director of Sexual Health Services Associate Professor Catherine O’Connor said the focus of the day would be to create greater awareness of HIV and encourage people to get tested.

“In 2012, there was a 24 per cent rise in HIV infections in NSW with 409 people diagnosed compared to 330 in 2011,” Associate Professor O’Connor said.

“An important benefit of getting tested is early diagnosis, which enables early treatment. Now thanks to advancements in antiretroviral medications, treatment for HIV is now simpler with fewer side effects,” she said.

The NSW Government’s HIV Strategy focuses on prevention and treatment policies and strategies, NGO partnerships, medical research and testing and treatment options.

Key aims of the strategy include:

- Reducing sexual transmission of HIV among gay men by 60 per cent by 2015, and 80 per cent by 2020.
- Decreasing rates of HIV infection in other populations, including injecting drug users, sex workers, Aboriginal people and heterosexuals.
- Reducing the time between infection and diagnosis for people with HIV to ensure early prevention education, access to treatment and reduce onward transmission.
- Increasing access to antiretroviral treatment to improve health and reduce the number of AIDS-related deaths.
- Eliminating cases of mother-to-child HIV transmission.

“While there is still no cure for HIV, the future for people with HIV is much brighter because of the high quality of treatment and healthcare options available,” Associate Professor O’Connor said.

HIV Awareness Day will start at 10.30am on the green between the James Cook and Joseph Bank buildings, Waterloo Neighbourhood Centre.

For information on World AIDSDay: www.worldaidsday.org.au.