

MEDIA RELEASE:

National Pharmacies help raise AIDS awareness and support people living with HIV

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The AIDS Council of South Australia Inc. (ACSA)



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The AIDS Council of SA (ACSA) today congratulated National Pharmacies for its ongoing support of raising AIDS Awareness and assisting people living with HIV/AIDS.

ACSA Executive Director, Shane Dinnison said National Pharmacies will place a point of sale box in each of their South Australian pharmacies for the month of February. "Each point of sale box contains merchandise such as red ribbons, lanyards and badges which National Pharmacies customers will be able to purchase, with the funds raised going directly towards supporting people living with HIV/AIDS", said Mr Dinnison. ACSA has supplied each pharmacy with an AIDS Awareness Kit, which provides an overview of the global AIDS problem.

"In little more than 25 years, over 60 million people have been infected and over 20 million people have died. In Australia, our quick and effective public health response has ensured that infection rates remain amongst the lowest in the world. However, successful prevention programmes are crucial if we are to continue to contain the epidemic. Key to these prevention programmes are general awareness campaigns and ACSA's partnership with National Pharmacies is a critical element of our ongoing information and awareness activities with the broader community", said Mr Dinnison.

"At National Pharmacies we pride ourselves on supporting a range of organisations focused on the health and wellbeing of the community. Our in store fundraising program, which operates on a monthly basis through all South Australian pharmacies, is just one example of how National Pharmacies is dedicated to meeting the needs of the communities we operate and serve in. To date, National Pharmacies has raised over \$7,000 for ACSA since the beginning of our partnership in 2005. This has undoubtedly contributed to promoting community awareness of HIV/AIDS and assisting towards ACSA's prevention programmes. We again look forward to our partnership with ACSA, so together we can continue to focus on the health and wellbeing of the community." Matthew Ramsden from National Pharmacies said:

In Australia and other Western countries, very effective medications have greatly improved life expectancy for people infected with HIV. However, HIV positive people still face a range of significant health concerns. Treatments often cause debilitating side effects, HIV and/or anti-viral treatments increase the risk of cardio-vascular and kidney disease and even with treatment people with HIV often develop the opportunistic infections and illnesses associated with AIDS. Poor health, reduced lifespan and quality of life, as well as poverty are amongst the issues faced by people living with HIV in Australia. Only around 50% of positive people are in employment, with the rest on benefits or retired. Almost all reported having left their career or reduced their career goals because of HIV. More than half had some difficulty meeting the cost of daily living and 28.3% were living below the poverty line. HIV Positive people experience discrimination in relation to accommodation and health services and many are reluctant to disclose their status to employers, colleagues, friends or family because of the stigma associated with HIV. More than half of positive people reported having their status disclosed without their permission.

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