

For immediate release, 30 November 2009

The AIDS Council of South Australia Inc.

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Take action to reduce discrimination World AIDS Day 2009

On the eve of World AIDS Day 2009, the AIDS Council of SA (ACSA) called for greater commitment from all sections of the South Australian community to combat HIV-related stigma and discrimination.

“Stigma and discrimination remain key barriers to dealing effectively with the HIV epidemic in Australia and around the world”, said ACSA’s Executive Director, Shane Dinnison. “ The impact of these is not only felt by individuals living with HIV but also has direct consequences on Australia’s public health response to the epidemic by undermining prevention, care and treatment efforts. It also remains the key obstacle for HIV-positive people disclosing their status to friends and family, employers and work colleagues, health care providers, insurance companies, landlords and sexual partners for fear of being treated less favourably, or being outrightly rejected or abused. More than a quarter of HIV positive people responding to *HIV Futures 6*, the survey of the overall health, well being and social situation of people living with HIV, said they experienced less favourable treatment because of HIV in relation to health services”, said Mr Dinnison.

“Addressing stigma and discrimination is absolutely crucial to improving the South Australian HIV/AIDS response”, said Mr Dinnison. “To achieve this, all those involved must prioritise planning and resources to scaling-up stigma and discrimination-reduction activities”, he said.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN HIV/AIDS STATISTICS

- In 2008 47 South Australians were diagnosed with HIV infection. This represents a decrease of 14.4% from 2007 and a 22.5% decrease on the 2006 figure.
- In the first 6 months of 2009, 27 people were diagnosed with HIV infection. Eighteen of those 27 people had either never been tested for HIV or had taken their last HIV test more than 12 months previously.
- An estimated 950 South Australians are now living with HIV/AIDS out of an estimated 17,500 people living with HIV in Australia at the end of 2008.
- As throughout Australia, transmission of HIV in SA is predominantly through sexual contact between gay men



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and men who have sex with men.

- For the 5 females diagnosed with HIV infection in SA in 2008 three originated from or reported sexual contact with partners from countries where there is a high prevalence of HIV infection.
- 89% of newly diagnosed HIV infections in 2008 in SA were male. The mean age of diagnosis in males was 37 years old with 76% of infections occurring in men 25-39 years of age.
- In SA in 2007, there were no deaths of people with AIDS. There were three deaths amongst HIV positive people, but the deaths were not necessarily all AIDS related.
- The trend to increased survival after HIV/AIDS diagnosis, associated with highly-active antiretroviral treatment, continues.
- Between 1984 and 2008 there were 390 Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) diagnoses in SA.
- In SA there were 1155 HIV diagnoses between 1984 and 2008.

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