



Jillian Skinner MP

Minister for Health Minister for Medical Research

MEDIA RELEASE

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FIRST PERMANENT RAPID HIV TESTING SHOPFRONT FOR TAYLOR SQUARE

To mark World AIDS Day, Health Minister Jillian Skinner today launched the first permanent rapid HIV testing shopfront in NSW in Taylor Square, Darlinghurst.

The a[TEST] shopfront builds on the success of recent pop-up HIV rapid testing sites in NSW and will be operated by ACON in partnership with South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (LHD) and St Vincent's Health Network.

Mrs Skinner said the a[TEST] rapid HIV testing shopfront would be operational from early 2015 and marks an improvement in accessible and convenient HIV testing services.

“Making HIV testing easier is a priority of the NSW Government’s *HIV Strategy 2012-2015*, which aims to dramatically drive down the number of new HIV infections,” Mrs Skinner said.

“The new a[TEST] permanent rapid HIV testing shopfront is a significant step in delivering quality, integrated, patient-centred care to the community. Oxford Street is also the perfect location for the shopfront given the local community’s commitment and success in facing the challenge of HIV over many, many years.”

Mrs Skinner said NSW Health figures released today showed testing had continued to increase both overall in NSW and among high risk populations.

“From July to September 2014, 9,373 HIV tests were undertaken in publically funded sexual health services in NSW - a 25 per cent increase compared the same period in 2013,” Mrs Skinner said.

“And in July to September in 2014, 4,214 HIV tests were undertaken for men who have sex with men in NSW - a 28 per cent increase compared the same period in 2013.

“And as at 30 September 2014, more than 89 per cent of people living with HIV who attended public sexual health clinics are receiving antiretroviral treatment.

“Preventing HIV is still as important as ever. About 10,500 people in NSW are living with diagnosed HIV infection, but about 10 per cent of people with HIV in NSW may be unaware they are infected. The NSW Government is committed to changing this statistic.

“Express clinics, rapid HIV testing, after hours and drop-in clinics, online appointment bookings, tests at GP clinics and faster and easier ways to get HIV test results are all part of a new era in HIV testing in NSW.

“Due to improved treatments, people living with HIV are now living longer and healthier lives, but there is still no cure for HIV,” Mrs Skinner said.

On World AIDS Day, Mrs Skinner will also joined Positive Life NSW to launch the next phase of their CHOOSE campaign ‘Take Control’. The CHOOSE campaign message is about empowering people living with HIV to be proactively involved in treatment decisions.

Mrs Skinner also visited Ankali House with Member for Coogee Bruce Notley-Smith for the official opening of the Albion Centre Rapid HIV Testing and Drug Information Service.

“Staffed by nurses and clinical psychologists, this new service will provide timely, community-based, access to testing and information for the community.

“It will provide after-hours and weekend access to assessment, rapid HIV testing, drug information and a referral program.

“The service will also be able to refer people who would not otherwise access services open during working hours, for comprehensive HIV care and treatment, and drug and alcohol program support.

Mr Notley-Smith said: “Ensuring people can access these services and support in the comfort of their community is important to provide a sense of ease and reassurance.

“This facility is an important addition to the growing number of services available for the community in our area. Providing enhanced access to testing and information is a vital initiative to stop the spread of HIV.”

About World AIDS Day: Held annually on 1 December, World AIDS Day raises awareness about the issues surrounding HIV and AIDS, allows people to show their support for people living with HIV and to commemorate those who have lost their lives. For information on World AIDS Day visit: www.worldaidsday.org.au

For more information on HIV testing, treatment and prevention go to: <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/endinghiv> or call the NSW Sexual Health Infolink on 1800 451 624. HIV testing is available from GPs, or click on the following link for other testing locations across NSW: www.health.nsw.gov.au/sexualhealth/Pages/sexual-health-clinics.aspx

To view the NSW HIV Strategy 2012-2015: A new era, visit: <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publications/Pages/nsw-hiv-strategy-2012-15-a-new-era.aspx>