



# Jillian Skinner MP

## Minister for Health Minister for Medical Research

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### MEDIA RELEASE

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Monday 23 February 2015

#### **STATE'S FIRST PERMANENT RAPID HIV TESTING SITE OPENS IN DARLINGHURST**

Health Minister Jillian Skinner was today joined by Coogee MP Bruce Notley-Smith and Liberal candidate for Sydney Patrice Pandeleos to officially open the state's first permanent rapid HIV testing site in Darlinghurst.

The NSW Government has committed \$460,000 over two years to establish the a[TEST] shopfront at 167 Oxford Street. It will be operated by ACON in partnership with South East Sydney Local Health District, the HIV Reference Laboratory of St Vincent's Hospital and the NSW Ministry of Health. Testing will begin today.

"This new testing shopfront is the first permanent community-based HIV testing service of its kind in NSW," Mrs Skinner said.

"It builds on the success of recent pop-up HIV rapid testing sites in NSW, as well as the temporary Oxford Street shopfront HIV testing service piloted during and after the 2014 Mardi Gras Festival.

"Establishing a permanent 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 up to the challenge of HIV over many, many years."

Mr Notley-Smith said: "The ease of access to this service as well as the fast turnaround of results will ensure many more people are tested for HIV and this is great news for the community."

Mrs Skinner said 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.

Around 10,500 people in NSW are living with diagnosed HIV infection but around 10 per cent of people with HIV in NSW may be unaware they are infected.

"A key focus in NSW is reducing the number of undiagnosed cases of HIV," Mrs Skinner said.

“Encouraging early treatment for those who are found to be positive has health benefits for them, as well as the broader community, as it can reduce onward transmission.”

Between October and December 2014, 7,947 HIV tests were conducted in all publically-funded sexual health services in NSW. This represents a 12 per cent increase compared with the same quarter in 2013.

A total of 3,291 HIV tests were conducted amongst men who have sex with men in NSW - a 19 per cent increase compared the same quarter in 2013.

“The message is getting through - testing, diagnosis and early treatment are key to driving down HIV transmissions in our state,” Mrs Skinner said.

While visiting the testing shopfront today, Mrs Skinner also launched the *Treat Early* phase of ACON's *Ending HIV* campaign.

ACON's *Treat Early* campaign, titled '*Undetectable*', focuses on the preventative benefits of HIV treatment, and in particular, the role of an undetectable viral load in reducing the risk of transmission.

For more information on HIV testing visit <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/endinghiv> or ring 1800 451 624.

To locate a testing site visit [www.health.nsw.gov.au/sexualhealth/Pages/sexual-health-clinics.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/sexualhealth/Pages/sexual-health-clinics.aspx)