

a[TEST]: peer led rapid HIV and STI testing for the gay community

Introduction

This project was an initiative to address a local need to develop and implement innovative HIV testing models to meet the NSW HIV Strategy 2012-2015 targets for increased testing in high-risk populations.

The project was the result of a collaboration between various organisations that involved innovative use of community peer educators, facilitated access to high risk gay men and conducted HIV rapid tests.

Key activities

Sydney Sexual Health Centre, with partners ACON and the Kirby Institute, developed outreach testing models staffed by peer educators and a specialist nurse.

Computer assisted self-interview kiosks were used to collect relevant information and reduce barriers to access. Various models of a[TEST] were used that were responsive to the particular setting.

Evaluation of the models found a high proportion of untested gay men attended the services and that all those who had a positive HIV or STI test were linked to care. This demonstrates that a[TEST] was addressing an unmet need in the community, also supported by high levels of client satisfaction. Across the state, a[TEST] models are now being rolled out in a variety of settings.



Key achievements

Models of a[TEST] implemented included after-hours testing at community organisation premises, a mobile testing caravan at Taylor Square for World AIDS Day 2013, and a Darlinghurst shop front for the Mardi Gras Festival 2014.

Evaluation demonstrated high rates of consumer satisfaction and success in accessing gay men who had never had a HIV test or were testing infrequently.

This partnership successfully implemented the first peer-led community-based rapid HIV testing service in Australia.