

MINISTER JOHN HATZISTERGOS, MINISTER FOR HEALTH

ANNOUNCEMENT OF SYDNEY'S SUCCESSFUL BID TO HOST INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE IN 2007

1 December 2005

- I am very pleased to be present here today with Professor David Cooper AO from St Vincent's Hospital and the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research at the University of New South Wales, co-chair of the International Aids Society 2007 Organising Committee, and my colleague the Minister for Tourism and Women, Sandra Nori to announce that Sydney has been chosen as the venue for the 4th International AIDS Society Conference on HIV Pathogenesis (Patho-genesis), Treatment and Prevention to be held in July 2007.
- It is very fitting that we are able to announce this great honour for Sydney on World AIDS Day.
- The fact that Sydney won the right to host this conference is testimony to Australia's research contribution to the international fight against AIDS.
- I congratulate the Australian Society for HIV Medicine (ASHM) for winning the bid to host the conference. This is the first International Aids Society Conference to be held in Australia and the first in Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention to take place in the Asia-Pacific region. The conference will provide a focus on this region, which is home to 60% of the world's population and an estimated 19% of people living with HIV infection.
- Australia has a very strong commitment to HIV education, prevention, treatment and research from the early years of the epidemic. It was one of the first countries to develop a national strategic approach to HIV/AIDS control, and has supported dedicated research centres in several disciplines that have established international reputations for innovation and scientific excellence.
- The response to HIV/AIDS in Australia has always been a collaborative partnership between the research sector, medical fraternity, government and community sectors.
- The NSW Government can indeed be very proud of its longstanding commitment to helping people with HIV and AIDS living in the community, and in the government programs designed to educate the community about HIV/AIDS to prevent the spread of the disease.
- This financial year, the NSW Health Department will allocate more than **\$85 million** to Area Health Services and non-government organisations for programs and services that manage HIV/AIDS and related diseases.
- Preventing new HIV infections has important public health and social economic benefits.

- Preventing new infections significantly reduces the burden on health and welfare systems and maximises individuals' capacity to participate in the community and the workforce.
- HIV prevention work in NSW utilises diverse strategies, including large-scale education campaigns to inform the community, individual and group education programs, and community development initiatives with populations at highest risk of HIV infection.
- There are approximately 10,000 people in NSW today living with HIV.
- Each Area Health Service in NSW currently conducts HIV prevention activities and provides free and confidential HIV testing and counselling to individuals at risk
- The Government's record on these issues is strong.
- HIV notification rates in NSW decreased during the 1990s and has remained relatively steady for a number of years.
- However, from 2001 to 2004, HIV notifications increased by 20 percent in NSW. Preliminary analysis of 2005 HIV notification data suggests the likelihood of a further increase, primarily among gay men. This is unacceptable.
- While the NSW Government and its partners including NSW Health, the AIDS Council of NSW, GPs and primary health care workers can be proud of their work, it is clear that **more** needs to be done.
- Although NSW rates of HIV notification continue to be low by international standards, all new notifications of disease remind us of the urgency with which we must continue to respond to this threat.
- The New South Wales Government will endeavour to ensure that the forthcoming conference in 2007 is a resounding success and that the Sydney conference will encourage the public to focus on the challenges that lay ahead in the fight to reduce HIV infections not just in Australia and the Asia Pacific region but world wide.
- **ENDS.**