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SYDNEY TO HOST MAJOR INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE

NSW Minister for Health John Hatzistergos and Minister for Tourism and Women Sandra Nori today announced that Sydney has been chosen to host the 4th International AIDS Society (IAS) Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention between 22-25 July 2007.

The prestigious event will bring up to 6,000 of the world's top HIV/AIDS experts to Sydney.

Making the announcement on World Aids Day with IAS committee member Professor David Cooper of St Vincent's Hospital, Mr Hatzistergos said the state's success in responding to HIV had been outstanding.

"The decision to hold the IAS 2007 conference in Sydney recognises the great contribution to the fight against HIV/AIDS made by NSW and Australian scientists, clinicians and researchers to advance our knowledge and understanding of the disease.

"Since the earliest days of the HIV epidemic NSW has developed effective policies to manage HIV/AIDS, provide the best possible care and treatment, support leading-edge research into the disease and to prevent and control new HIV infections," Mr Hatzistergos said.

"After 25 years' experience, there is overwhelming scientific evidence that the HIV management policies followed by the NSW Government have been immensely successful in preventing thousands of our young people from being affected by HIV/AIDS," he said.

Minister for Tourism Sandra Nori said the decision to hold IAS 2007 in Sydney underlined how effectively Sydney continued to compete in the world's conference and travel markets.

"IAS 2007 will bring to Sydney up to 6,000 international delegates, many of whom will stay in Sydney and Australia for up to 2 weeks after the conference," Ms Nori said.

"This means that IAS 2007 will directly inject about \$50 million into the Sydney economy, which is good news for the NSW travel, tourism and accommodation industries and for jobs," she said.

The 2007 conference will be organised by the Australasian Society of HIV Medicine (ASHM) which represents over 800 Australian and New Zealand HIV scientists, clinicians and researchers.

International HIV/AIDS expert and organising committee chair Professor David Cooper said Australia's rates of HIV and AIDS were among the lowest of all comparable countries.

"The IAS 2007 conference will be a tremendous opportunity for the world's top HIV/AIDS scientists and researchers to meet with their Australian counterparts to exchange the latest knowledge about the disease and to inform the general public about progress made in the fight against HIV/AIDS," Professor Cooper said.

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