



NACCHO

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

Media Release

30-11-2009

Peak Aboriginal Health Body commemorates World AIDS Day

Mr Justin Mohamed Chair of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) says World AIDS Day, December 1 is a time to appreciate people living with HIV or AIDS* and their support teams in the community including carers, family, friends and health workers.

"The higher level of existing ill health raises the vulnerability to HIV in the Aboriginal community" Mr Mohamed said.

"Yet concerted efforts, including within the over 150 Aboriginal community controlled health services, has been able to contain rates of HIV in our community which are similar to those of the general Australian population.

"Sexual and reproductive health workers and alcohol and other drugs programs within Aboriginal community controlled health services have helped to limit the potential epidemic and provide support to those living with HIV and AIDS.

"In areas of the greatest need, Aboriginal community controlled health services host a range of holistic initiatives aimed at reducing the burden of ill health caused by HIV including needle and syringe programs, s100 prescribers, drug treatment programs, healthy liver programs, prisoner support programs and other specialised counselling services.

"Our frontline services benefit from a close partnership with the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research (NCHECR) at the University of NSW.

"NACCHO and NCHECR formalised our partnership last year in a Memorandum of Understanding. The MOU ensures our health workers and researchers work in collaboration to improve health outcomes based on sound evidence.

"NCHECR's annual *Bloodborne viral and sexually transmitted infections in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: Surveillance and Evaluation Report* is the definitive publication in this field" Mr Mohamed said.

NCHECR's 2009 report** noted (p11):

A very different epidemiological profile exists for HIV infection among the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population compared to that in the Australian born non-Indigenous population. For infections newly diagnosed in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in the five years from 2004 to 2008, exposure to HIV was attributed to sex between men in 54%, injecting drug use in 22%, heterosexual contact in 23%. This is compared with the non-Indigenous population, where exposure to HIV was attributed to sex between men in 79%, injecting drug use in 3%, heterosexual contact in 13% and was undetermined in 5%.

The motto of this year's World AIDS Day "Take Action, No Discrimination" very much fits with the philosophy of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services where our member services continue to take action in a culturally appropriate manner by providing care and services to people living with HIV, and by minimising the risk of transmission of HIV.

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*Human Immunodeficiency Virus is transmissible through bodily fluids such as blood, and with time, HIV can cause Acquired Immunodeficiency Disease Syndrome.

** [http://www.nchechr.unsw.edu.au/nchechrweb.nsf/resources/ATSI-SR/\\$file/ATSIP-ASR-09.pdf](http://www.nchechr.unsw.edu.au/nchechrweb.nsf/resources/ATSI-SR/$file/ATSIP-ASR-09.pdf)