

QuAC at Forefront with COUNT HIV Survey

The Queensland AIDS Council has been chosen by the University of NSW Centre for Social Research for Health to roll out the national COUNT study during the coming weeks of Pride – which will be a first of its kind in the state of Queensland.

The COUNT study will be conducted in conjunction with the annual Gay Community Periodic Survey (GCPS). This year Queensland Positive People will conduct the GCPS, whilst QuAC will carry out COUNT. This marks a significant collaboration between the two organisations to capture reliable data on gay men’s sexual behaviour and the incidence of undiagnosed HIV in Brisbane.

The COUNT study will provide previously unavailable estimates of gay, bisexual men and MSM living with HIV, and help identify how many of those men are unaware they are HIV positive. The data collected will give an important insight to the characteristics of men with undiagnosed HIV infection, and will be used for the development of new HIV prevention policy and programs.

“For many years we have estimated that there are significant numbers of men who believe they are HIV negative, but are actually living with HIV. It is imperative that we understand more about this population, so that our education strategies are appropriate for these men,” said Michael Scott, Executive Director of QuAC.

“The Queensland AIDS Council remains committed to reducing HIV transmission across Queensland” said Scott. “In 2012 we were the first site to provide rapid testing in Queensland, in 2013 we launched the Ending HIV campaign, and in 2014 we are expanding our sexual health testing services via Clinic 30 as well as contributing to social research through COUNT”

Participation in the COUNT study will be easy, and involves a painless and quick saliva test – participants will have the option of remaining *anonymous* (provide the sample to test for HIV but choose not to receive your results) or choose *confidential* (provide a sample to test HIV and provide contact details to later receive HIV results).

In order to participate in the COUNT study, men will need to have completed the Gay Community Periodic Survey, be aged 18 or over, sexually active with men in the last 5 years and able to give or withhold consent. Whether you are HIV positive, negative, or unsure, you are eligible to take part in COUNT.

Both the Gay Community Periodic Survey and the COUNT study will be conducted at Pride Fair Day on 20th September, and will be at LGBTI venues from 12th September to 21st September. The Gay Community Periodic Survey recruiting will continue to the 28th September.

For more information on the COUNT study, go to www.count.org.au

ENDS

The Queensland AIDS Council was established in 1984 and is a community-based, not-for-profit, registered health promotion charity that works to improve the health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Queenslanders, prevent HIV and build the capacity of the community.