

2019 Melbourne Gay Community Periodic Survey Closes this Weekend

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

24 JANUARY 2019 — Thorne Harbour Health (formerly the Victorian AIDS Council) along with the Centre for Social Research in Health (CSRH) and the Kirby Institute at UNSW is conducting the Melbourne Gay Community Periodic Survey (MGPCS). This annual survey takes a snapshot of the sexual practices among men who have sex with other men in relation to the transmission of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

From Sunday 20 January at the 2019 Midsumma Carnival Day through Sunday 27 January, gay and bisexual men who have sex with men (MSM) are being asked to participate in the survey at a range of locations across Melbourne, including medical clinics, social venues such as pubs and bars, and sex-on-premises venues. Only Melbourne men who have had sex with another man in the past five years should complete a survey form, as well as men who don't live in Melbourne but who regularly participate in the Melbourne gay community. The survey is completely anonymous, and the results are communicated later in the year via LGBTI media, through public meetings and seminars, in online reports, and through journal articles.

First conducted in Melbourne in 1998, the short survey takes a snapshot of gay men's sexual practices related to the transmission of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. The survey is important because it gives a snapshot of the lives of gay and homosexually active men in Melbourne from year to year. It allows comparisons to be made over time and for a picture to emerge of the changes in sexual practices and partnering habits, drug use, HIV and STI rates, and testing habits.

The Periodic Survey is also conducted in other states during gay community festivals so that comparisons can be drawn between states. Data from the surveys are used to form local and national sexual health promotion campaigns and education strategies.

"All same-sex attracted guys are welcome to complete this annual survey — gay, bi, trans and non-binary both HIV negative and HIV Positive," said the survey's Victorian coordinator, Tex McKenzie.

"New questions added this year ask about whether individuals or their partners use PrEP or have an undetectable viral load. And not all questions need to be answered by everyone; there are specific questions for men who are living with HIV as well as general questions that everyone can answer."

Thorne Harbour Health CEO Simon Ruth added: "The Periodic Survey is an important piece of research that helps us target not only campaigns around HIV and STI-prevention, but around mental health issues and alcohol and drug use in our community as well."

"The data we gather from the survey over time is an invaluable resource for both state-based and national campaigns."

The survey will be conducted over the weekend ahead at number of venues, including Subway Sauna, The Laird, Wet on Wellington, The Peel, and Club 80.

ENDS

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