



## **MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE MONDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2009**

### **WE’RE FAILING OUR KIDS ON HIV**

There are some disturbing trends in the rates of HIV infections in Australia. Although the total of new infections appears to have stabilised at around 1,000 per year, there is a shift in the groups most affected. The proportion attributable to homosexual contact remains steady at two thirds, but there appears to be a significant increase in the number of younger men becoming HIV positive.

While welcoming this stabilisation, the AIDS Action Council (AAC) argues that this is not good news. The current rate still leaves us about where we were in 1989; the year that the first National Strategy was launched. General Manager, Andrew Burry, says that it is disturbing to see a trend where 1 in 5 of all infections are now occurring in men under the age of 29. “We’re not suggesting that we should panic, but we do think we should be looking for a fresh approach in the way that we target this group,” he said.

Younger people have embraced many new technologies and talk to each other in larger numbers and more regularly than ever before. AAC believes that this presents a huge opportunity to raise the awareness of HIV and its consequences. “There is no doubt that the conversations that younger people have amongst themselves will have more impact than government sponsored health education campaigns or simple condom promotion,” says Burry, “but the trick will be to get those conversations started.”

In launching World AIDS Day 2009, AAC is calling for discussion about HIV in more mainstream settings. Burry says that HIV needs a greater profile in the home and school if we really want to equip young people to make the choices that keep them safe. The theme this year is “What are you telling your kids about HIV?”.

“If you aren’t talking to your kids about HIV, then maybe – and dangerously – nobody is” he said.

(ENDS)

*Please see event details on next page.*

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## PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

### LANYON HIGHSCHOOL STUDENTS AND PURRCUSSION CALL FOR YOUTH AWARENESS OF HIV AT LAUNCH OF WORLD AIDS AWARENESS WEEK 2009



**World AIDS Awareness Week**, culminating in World AIDS Day on the **1 December**, is commemorated worldwide to raise awareness of the continuing impact of HIV. In Canberra, the AIDS Action Council is co-ordinating a number of events during the week to raise awareness in the community of the continuing impact of HIV.

Keynote speakers will discuss contemporary issues around HIV/AIDS and performance art including students from Lanyon High School and women's drum group Purrcussion will take place in Civic Square.

**Time:** 10.30 am Tuesday 24 November. Morning tea served.

**Venue:** ACT Legislative Assembly, London Circuit

**More information:** Contact AIDS Action Council on 02 6257 2855