21 October 2013

Member for Drysdale Lia Finocchiaro has raised concerns over the rise of HIV cases that have been detected in the Territory.

Ms Finocchiaro officially opened the 25th annual Australasian HIV&AIDS Conference in Darwin today on behalf of Minister for Health Robyn Lambley.

“Although the fight against HIV and AIDS has come a long way, the focus needs to be maintained to ensure Territorians understand the risk of HIV and how to prevent it,” Ms Finocchiaro said.

“While there are good signs that the tide is turning on the global level, locally there is still a lot of work to do.

“In 2011, the estimated number of people living in Australia with diagnosed HIV infection was 24,731, with 203 of these in the Northern Territory.

“The number of new HIV diagnosis in the Territory in 2012 was 36. While this is a significant increase when compared to the number in 2011, it is partly attributable to our mobile and globally connected population.

“More than half of these cases were identified as people who have immigrated from or travelled to or through a high prevalence country and 39 per cent of the notifications came from asylum seekers at our detention centres.

“In response to our 36 new HIV notifications, the Government has partnered with the Northern Territory AIDS and Hepatitis Council to develop and oversee the implementation of a HIV traveller’s campaign with a particular focus on culturally and linguistically diverse communities.”

This year’s report by the UN agency charged with combatting the disease confirms that while AIDS still kills 1.6 million people a year, this is down from a peak of 2.3 million in 2005.

The number of new HIV diagnoses in Australia in 2011 was 1,137, an increase of 8.2 per cent compared to the number in 2010.

HIV testing and treatment continues to increase through the hard work of the Northern Territory AIDS and Hepatitis Council, the Department of Health’s Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Unit, primary healthcare services and access to sexuality education.

In another positive, the nation’s health ministers recently established clear targets and timelines for further combatting HIV in Australia. These include reducing sexual transmission of HIV by 50 per cent and uptake of HIV treatment by people with HIV by 90 per cent, by 2015.

“The NT stands ready to contribute to and be a part of the national response,” Ms Finocchiaro said.

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