

## MEDIA RELEASE

**8 June 2009**

**For immediate release**

### **Keep it covered Cairns**

As a 'premier regional city' and international gateway to and from Australia, Cairns plays a significant role in Australia's tourism industry. To ensure that Cairns' friendly locals, accessible location and relaxed Australian attitude do not unwittingly play a role in putting locals, visitors and travellers at risk of exposure to sexually transmitted infections ("STI/s"), Family Planning Queensland ("FPQ") is taking action.

On **10th June 2009**, at **Rydgies Esplanade Resort**, FPQ and the 'Travellers' Project' steering committee will launch a new sexual health promotion campaign to highlight the absolute necessity of those travelling between Cairns and neighbouring countries with an identified higher prevalence of HIV to engage only in safe sex practices.

The sexual health promotion campaign will feature posters with the slogan, '**Taking risks? Use condoms and take a test**' and advocates that visitors to neighbouring countries with a level of identified STI risk consider the possibility of their sexual activities in advance, and pack accordingly.

*Unfortunately, locations such as PNG, that are regular travel spots for Australians on business, have far higher incidences of HIV infection, comments Rowena Harper of FPQ Cairns. We have been working with Queensland Health and other business stakeholders to develop a campaign that will hopefully make travellers take notice that their sexual activity in some of our neighbouring countries may present risks to their sexual health if they do not take precautions, said Ms Harper.*

The new campaign has been developed after consultation between key business and health stakeholders to address the recent spike in the rates of sexually transmitted infections, most worryingly HIV, amongst local heterosexual males. Using condoms has proven to reduce the incidence of STIs during sexual activity but the rising rates of infection over the last 5 years in the Cairns region indicate that we may be growing complacent with ensuring protection by always using a condom.

The results of focus group testing conducted by FPQ and other business and health stakeholders have been applied to develop specifically targeted educational materials for those travelling between Cairns and PNG and who may be participating in sexual activities en route. This material is being used in the campaign. FPQ is concerned that, despite the important nature of our business relations with PNG and other neighbouring countries, we need to remember that estimates indicate that 1 in 50 people in PNG has HIV and that equal numbers of men and women are affected. The simple use of a condom during sexual activity may protect sexually active travellers from an otherwise unacceptable risk.

FPQ and the Doll's House (Cairns Sexual Health Services) provide confidential advice and testing for sexually transmitted infections, and may be contacted on 4051 3788 or 4050 6205.

**ENDS**

**For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact:  
Rowena Harper on 07 4031 2232 or rharper@fpq.com.au**

**[www.fpq.com.au](http://www.fpq.com.au)**