

Mediaportal Report

17/09/2008

▶ **ABC 612 Brisbane (Brisbane)**
06:00 News - 17/09/2008 6:02 AM
Newsreader

Qld Health says a cluster of Cairns men contracted HIV after having unprotected sex with women in Papua New Guinea.

Interviewees: Dr Darren Russell, Qld Health

Duration: 0.43

Summary ID: B00032105442

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Demographics

Male:	18000
Female:	26000
AB:	15000
GB:	27000
All People:	44000

▶ **Torres radio to broadcast warnings**
Cairns Post, 17/09/08, General News, Page 3
By: None

Torres Strait airwaves will carry HIV warnings over the next three months to help combat the spread of the disease from Papua New Guinea on to the Australian mainland. The Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations the peak body for HIV response launched the new public education campaign on Torres Strait radio station 4MW last week.

Clip Ref: **00041270738**

87 words
Type: News Item
Photo: No

▶ **Red alert on HIV spread**
Cairns Post, 17/09/08, General News, Page 3
By: Thomas Chamberlin Chamberiint@tcpnewsitdcomau

A DOCTOR has warned Cairns has an HIV epidemic and could have the highest infection rate in Australia with a positive diagnosis every fortnight. The shock warning comes as six Cairns businessmen, all heterosexual, have fallen victim to HIV recently after sleeping with prostitutes in Papua New Guinea.

Clip Ref: **00041270739**

396 words
Type: News Item
Photo: Yes

▶ **We must be alert to HIV**

Cairns Post, 17/09/08, Editorials, Page 12
By: None

THE claim that Cairns could have the highest rate of new HIV cases in the country, made by head of the local sexual health service Dr Darren Russell (pictured), should sound as a warning to all in the community. In the past, there has been a tendency by many to consider HIV and AIDS as something that affects others but not themselves.

Clip Ref: **00041269569**

270 words
Type: Editorial
Photo: Yes

▶ **HIV rise linked to holidays in Asia**

Australian, 17/09/08, General News, Page 3
By: Adam Cresswell

Health editor CLUSTERS of heterosexual men are becoming infected with HIV while on business or holiday trips to Papua New Guinea and Southeast Asian countries, where epidemics are raging unchecked. The trend has been detected among miners and other workers based in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia, and has some experts concerned it could provide the virus with a route into the mainstream population.

Clip Ref: **00041258212**

529 words
Type: News Item
Photo: Yes



Red alert on HIV spread

Thomas Chamberlin

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A DOCTOR has warned Cairns has an HIV epidemic and could have the highest infection rate in Australia with a positive diagnosis every fortnight.

The shock warning comes as six Cairns businessmen, all heterosexual, have fallen victim to HIV recently after sleeping with prostitutes in Papua New Guinea.

Three of the men had partners in Cairns, none of whom had the virus, Dr Darren Russell, the director of the Cairns Sexual Health Service, said.

"We think the rate of new infection in Cairns is higher than Brisbane, Sydney or Melbourne," he said.

"It's not something to be proud of and the level doesn't show any sign of abating.

"With a population of 150,000 people, one new diagnosis every fortnight on average is not good.

"We don't have any indication of any other hot spots in Australia at the moment."

Dr Russell said he was concerned there seemed to be a new trend forming with heterosexuals being found HIV positive, although gay men still made up the majority of positive cases.

He said all the heterosexual businessmen infected in PNG were aged 45-66 and they made regular visits to that country, where about 2 per cent of adults are now infected with HIV.

"In general, these men didn't use condoms for sexual contact in PNG and probably a lot of heterosexual men and women in Australia don't think they are at risk of HIV," Dr Russell said.

Another concern for Dr Russell was a possible AIDS outbreak in the Torres Strait. He said about 55,000 people moved between PNG and the

Torres Strait each year.

He said the fly-in fly-out mining boom around Australia and neighbouring countries had also been blamed for an increase in heterosexual men contracting HIV in the past three years.

Speaking from Perth, Dr Russell said he was going to address a sexual health conference about the issue tomorrow.

Dr Russell also warned of fake novelty condoms which circulate around pubs and clubs and outside of Australia.

"We're advising these men to take condoms with them," he said.

"Some of the condoms overseas may not be of the same high standard as Australian condoms."

► For more information contact the Cairns Sexual Health Clinic on 4050 6205.



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– Dr Darren Russell



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MTWTF--

The Cairns Post

our say

Wednesday, September 17, 2008

We must be alert to HIV

THE claim that Cairns could have the highest rate of new HIV cases in the country, made by head of the local sexual health service Dr Darren Russell (pictured), should sound as a warning to all in the community.

In the past, there has been a tendency by many to consider HIV and AIDS as something that affects others but not themselves.

It has been widely, and wrongly, dismissed as something of little concern if you are not gay or do not live in places such as Papua New Guinea where infection rates are high.

But while gay men continue to represent the majority of new cases identified, the virus is now being found in growing numbers of heterosexuals.

So far six heterosexual men have been identified as having picked up the virus from PNG while visiting the country on business in the past 10 months. But that number is likely to grow as PNG infection rates rise.

However, Australian visitors to that country are not the main area of concern. Tens of thousands of PNG nationals visit areas of the Torres Strait and sometimes Cape York in

parts of our northern border that can never be completely sealed.

Sexual health experts fear HIV will travel south with those visitors, making its way into the mainstream population again. We have been forewarned. Now is the time for more action such as the publicity campaign launched on Straits radio.

But much more than that needs to be done, including upgrading the standard of medical care in these remote areas so early identification and management of the inevitable cases can be carried out.





HIV rise linked to holidays in Asia

Adam Cresswell
 Health editor

CLUSTERS of heterosexual men are becoming infected with HIV while on business or holiday trips to Papua New Guinea and Southeast Asian countries, where epidemics are raging unchecked.

The trend has been detected among miners and other workers based in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia, and has some experts concerned it could provide the virus with a route into the mainstream population.

As new national figures to be released today show numbers of new HIV infections overall continuing to increase nationally, doctors attending a Perth conference yesterday revealed six Queensland businessmen had been diagnosed with HIV in the past year after liaisons with women in PNG.

Cairns Sexual Health service director Darren Russell said the main concern was not knowing how many other cases were yet to be diagnosed.

“There may be none, but

statistically it’s likely that there are more,” Associate Professor Russell said. “Unless they go to get tested, they could be undiagnosed for a long time, and could pass the infection on to women in Australia.”

Three of the six Queensland men had regular female partners in Australia, but all the partners had tested negative for HIV.

Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations executive director Don Baxter said there had been a 68 per cent increase in HIV infections acquired overseas by heterosexual West Australian men between 2002-04 and 2005-07.

“It appears to be not just miners; it appears to be (linked to) the additional funds flowing into WA from the resources boom,” Mr Baxter said.

“What we think is happening is quite a lot more people are travelling to Asia, and it would appear that a number are having unprotected sex with female partners who are HIV-positive.

“Given the ease of travel to Asia, it’s a cause for concern.”

West Australian Aids Council

executive director Trish Langdon said 41 people in the state were diagnosed as having acquired HIV overseas in 2002-04, rising to 91 in 2005-07.

Heterosexual men accounted for two-thirds of that increase.

She described the phenomenon as a “huge concern” that appeared to be linked in part to the rise in fly-in, fly-out working arrangements in which men travelled away from their permanent homes to mining towns such as Port Hedland.

In many cases, their 10-day breaks were spent on trips to places such as Thailand, where the HIV risk was far higher than in Western Australia, Ms Langdon said.

The latest Australian statistics, to be released today by the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research, found that the number of new HIV diagnoses rose by 5.3 per cent, from 998 in 2006 to 1051 last year.

The report found chlamydia to be the most commonly reported sexually transmitted infection,

with 51,867 cases diagnosed last year, a 9 per cent increase on the previous year.

Diagnoses of syphilis also more than doubled, from 3.1 cases per 100,000 people in 2004 to 6.6 cases last year, an increase largely confined to gay men.

John Kaldor, the centre’s deputy director, said that although HIV diagnoses were still a long way below their 1987 peak, last year’s rate was still nearly 50 per cent higher than the low point of 718 new cases, reached in 1999.

