

MEDIA RELEASE

3 August 2015

New Blood Borne Virus Service for Women with HIV at Relationships Australia South Australia

Building on its strong track record, Relationships Australia South Australia is proud to announce the inclusion of Women's HIV Services as part of its suite of Blood Borne Virus Services (BBV). The new service is funded by SA Health.

Naomi Dwyer, Women's and Children's Health Network Chief Executive Officer said, 'We are pleased to be able to support Relationships Australia SA to provide a new and high quality service for women living with HIV and for their communities. They have great expertise in working effectively with women and communities to provide much needed information, education and active support.'

The Women's HIV Peer Support Program will respond to the significant growth in female notifications of HIV in South Australia in the past 10 years. Latest figures from the Kirby Annual Report indicate that in 2012 there were estimated to be 147 women living with diagnosed HIV infection in SA. Where country of birth data exists it is apparent that a significant majority of these women are from CALD backgrounds (predominantly Asian and African).

Relationships Australia SA will be using a community development approach that promotes knowledge, skills and behaviours around BBV prevention and treatment. These approaches include community engagement and capacity building, peer education and advocacy. This approach has been found to work well with people from CALD backgrounds.

'This service will aim to reach its target group by supporting strong and informed peer networks among specific target populations of HIV positive women, and by developing peer leaders,' said Enaam Oudih Practice Manager of Blood Borne Virus and Multicultural Services at Relationships Australia SA.

'We want to empower women to support and mentor others, particularly those who are vulnerable and socially isolated due to their cultural background or family expectations, resulting in secrecy and reluctance to access services,' said Ms. Oudih.

As part of the service delivery, Relationships Australia SA registered training organisation, the Australian Institute of Social Relations, will offer formal training to help build women's confidence and leadership skills. Formal training has been found to increase community participation and engagement around HIV and STI related issues within CALD communities and other priority population groups.

Relationships Australia SA is committed to a rights based model health promotion response as evidenced in the guidelines of groups such as the Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV, 'We can't be talking at people; we need to be talking with people. It is only by listening to those most affected that we can bring about real change.'¹ This approach will underpin the ethos of this new Blood Borne Virus service for women with HIV.

¹ International HIV/AIDS Alliance (2010) *Greater involvement of people living with HIV (GIPA) Good Practice Guide*. http://issuu.com/aids_alliance/docs/gpg-gipa-english?e=2748321/2647361

About Relationships Australia South Australia

Relationships Australia South Australia is a not-for-profit, secular, community service organisation with more than 62 years' experience in providing specialist health and community services. We assist over 26,000 people each year throughout regional and metropolitan South Australia, and currently employ over 300 staff in 8 core sites and numerous community outreach locations.

Our Registered Training Organisation, the Australian Institute of Social Relations offers specialised community and health sector training and education.

For more information call 1300 364 277 or visit our website www.rasa.org.au

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