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MEDIA RELEASE



AUSTRALIA'S LEADING DESIGNERS SUPPORT WORLD AIDS DAY

Brisbane fashionistas will be able to get their hands on exclusive fashion accessories from some of Australia's leading designers at the Queensland World AIDS Day Get RED Gala Cocktail Party on Thursday 1 December at C Gallery.

Internationally renowned designers Romance was Born, Maripossa, Cutler & Gross and Mania Mania have teamed with Australia's fashion elite including Foxtan Danger, Peter Morrissey, Gala Curious and Rebecca Manning to design an exclusive accessory in red, the colour of the global fight against AIDS.

Former Big Brother contestant and Get RED host David Graham said that, as a well-known Australian, he chose to participate in the event as he believes prominent Australians have a responsibility to raise awareness of those living with HIV/AIDS.

"People from all walks of life are affected by HIV and tragically the number of those infected continues to grow," Mr Graham said. "I strongly believe we all have a responsibility to do what we can do to support the fight against the spread of HIV, especially those of us in positions of influence.

"Being in a privileged position means I'm able to direct public opinion and I believe that those in similar positions of influence should take up that challenge. That is why the designers jumped at the chance to create their own red accessory for this year's World AIDS Day event," he said.

Designer Peter Morrissey urged all Australians to support the fight against HIV. "Prevention is the answer," he said. "Education and awareness are vital in stopping this disease. Please buy a ribbon to assist in fighting HIV and AIDS."

Queensland Positive People General Manager, Simon O'Connor, said the theme of the 2011 World AIDS Day--*HIV Is Still Here*— reflected the need for everyone to talk with family and friends about HIV.

"It is still important to talk about not contracting and not transmitting HIV," Mr O'Connor said. "It is still important to talk about HIV testing and still important for everyone to know their HIV status so that HIV has nowhere to hide. It is still important to talk about all these things because, through our conversations, we maintain our determination to fight HIV and reject stigma and discrimination. HIV is still here. The choice is yours."

Mr O'Connor said he was encouraged by the positive inroads made in recent years in preventing the spread of HIV and in treating those living with the disease.

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“Over the past three decades we have made significant gains in the fight against HIV in a relatively short period of time,” he said. “Undeterred by its challenges, we have continued to tighten our control of HIV and diminish it from being a certain terminal illness into a chronically manageable one for a majority of Australians.”

“It is important for us to take some time to celebrate the progress we have made and commemorate all those we have lost in fight, for this battle has cost us dearly. However, despite our achievements thus far, HIV is still here. Have we been able to render HIV curable? No, we have not. Can we afford to become complacent and loosen our grip on this insidious virus? No, we must not,” he said.

In 2010, 206 Queenslanders were diagnosed with HIV infection, the highest number of HIV notifications reported since 1984.

However, the annual number of new AIDS diagnoses continues to decrease, as does the number of deaths from AIDS. This may be due to the use of effective antiretroviral treatment.

Mr O'Connor is encouraging the people of Brisbane to join in events to celebrate the lives of those lost to AIDS and help raise awareness of the continuing battle against the spread of HIV.

“I encourage everyone this World AIDS Day to show your support: wear a red ribbon, talk to your friends and work colleagues about HIV or make a donation to an AIDS charity. Knowledge, compassion and action are the strongest weapons we have in the fight against HIV.”

The aim of World AIDS Day is to raise consciousness in the community about HIV/AIDS issues, including the need for support and understanding for people living with HIV/AIDS, and the need for the development of education and prevention initiatives.

HIV Is Still Here will be the focus of WORLD AIDS Day 2011.

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