

Issue 126 – December 2017

Season's greetings from the PLA

The Prostitution Licensing Authority (PLA) extends its best wishes to all its stakeholders for a peaceful and happy festive season, spent in the company of family and friends, and for a healthy and prosperous 2018.

Closure of Office of PLA over Christmas & New Year period

The Office of the PLA will be closed from Thursday 21 December 2017 to Friday 5 January 2018 (inclusive) over the Christmas and New Year period. The office will reopen on Monday 8 January 2018.

Infections to be aware of

The Kirby Institute has published its *HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections in Australia Annual Surveillance Report 2017*. There are a range of infections that sex workers, clients and other participants in the sex industry should be aware of.

Chlamydia

According to the report: "Chlamydia was the most frequently notified sexually transmissible infection (STI) in Australia, with a total of 71,751 notifications in 2016" (p. 10). This total excludes Victoria because data was unavailable. 75% of notifications were amongst those aged 15-29 but the report says that "the vast majority" of infections in this age group are undiagnosed and untreated (p. 13). Notifications increased by 8% from

2015 to 2016 but had been "relatively stable between 2011 and 2015" (p. 120). Rates of chlamydia are higher in females than in males.

In Queensland in 2016, there were 22,742 notifications of chlamydia, up from 21,188 in the previous year. For the past decade, notification rates per 100,000 population have been higher in Queensland, than nationally.

In terms of female sex workers, the report says that, "chlamydia incidence increased by 35% between 2012 and 2016 (from 7.8 to 10.5 per 100 person-years)" (p. 129).

Gonorrhoea

Nationally, there were 23,887 notifications of gonorrhoea in 2016, an increase of 29% from the previous year. Three-quarters of notifications are in males. Gonorrhoea notification rates have increased by 63% between 2012 and 2016.

In Queensland, there were 4,030 notifications of gonorrhoea in 2016, compared to 3,036 in the previous year. In 2016 in Queensland, there were 86 notifications per 100,000 population, which was lower than the national rate of 100.8.

As for population groups most affected: "Gonorrhoea and infectious syphilis in Australia are diagnosed primarily in gay and bisexual men in urban settings, and in young heterosexual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote areas, though gonorrhoea notification rates among women in urban settings have increased steadily" (p. 13).

In terms of female sex workers, the report says that, "gonorrhoea incidence was 5.3 per 100 person-years in 2016, increasing by 47% from 3.6 per 100 person-years in 2012" (p. 147).

Syphilis

Nationally, there were 3,367 notifications of infectious syphilis (infections of less than two years duration) in 2016. Notifications were almost exclusively in males (87%). Notification rates have increased by 107% from 2012 to 2016.

In Queensland, there were 680 notifications of infectious syphilis in 2016, compared to 575 in the previous year. Notification rates increased by 66% between 2012 and 2016. In 2016, rates of infectious syphilis per 100,000 population in Queensland (14.4) were practically the same as the national rate (14.3).

In terms of female sex workers, the report says that in 2016, the infectious syphilis incidence, "was 0.4 per 100 person-years, and fluctuated between 0.2 and 0.5 per 100 person-years over the past five years (2012-2016)" (p. 163).

Viral hepatitis

There were 11,949 new hepatitis C diagnoses in 2016, with males accounting for two-thirds of cases. Notification rates of the virus were stable between 2012 and 2015 but increased by 12% from 2015 to 2016. The report says that this increase, "is likely to relate to increased testing in the context of new hepatitis C treatments" (p. 7). 51% of injecting drug users attending needle and syringe programs in 2016 had hepatitis C.

There were 6,555 new hepatitis B diagnoses in 2016, with the incidence being almost equal among males and females. Notification rates have been stable from 2012 to 2016. It is estimated that there are 233,034 people living in Australia with chronic hepatitis B, with 40% having been born in Northeast Asia or Southeast Asia.

According to the report: "Hepatitis B in adolescents and adults in Australia is transmitted through a variety of pathways, including injecting drug use and sexual contact, unlike hepatitis C which is strongly associated with injecting risk behaviour. However, most people living with chronic hepatitis B in Australia were born overseas and acquired hepatitis B at birth or in early childhood" (p. 9).

HIV

The national rate of new HIV diagnoses was 1,066 in 2012, compared to 1,013 in 2016, with the rate stable in the between years. In Queensland, there were 208 diagnoses in 2012, compared to 195 in 2016. The rate of new diagnoses per 100,000 population in Queensland in 2016 was 4.1, practically identical to the national rate of 4.2.

The most at risk population group continues to be men who have sex with men. In 2016, 70% of new HIV diagnoses were due to male-to-male sex, with a further 5% due to male-to-male sex and injecting drug use. By contrast, 21% of new diagnoses were attributed to heterosexual sex.

As for female sex workers, the report says that for those, "attending sexual health services who had at least one repeat HIV test (7005), there were only two seroconversions during 11,196 person-years at risk, equating to an overall HIV incidence of 0.07 per 100 person-years ... The HIV incidence remained at or under 0.11 per 100 person-years over the past five years" (p. 45). It is further observed that: "The incidence of HIV among women involved in sex work is

extremely low, among the lowest in the world, due to highly successful HIV prevention for this priority population which must also be sustained" (p. 5).

It is estimated that by the end of 2016, there were 26,444 people living with HIV in Australia. The vast majority (19,855) of persons were infected by male-to-male sex. The prevalence of HIV in Australia continues to be low (0.13% among persons older than 15 years) in comparison to other developed nations. It is 0.2% in the United Kingdom and 0.5% in the United States of America.

According to the report: "There has been a large increase over the past 10 years in the number of people living with HIV, the proportion taking effective treatments and the proportion achieving suppressed viral load. HIV treatments do not cure the infection, but prevent it from causing illness and – while undetectable viral load is maintained – virtually eliminate the risk of onward transmission to sexual partners. This is referred to as 'treatment as prevention' (TasP)" (p. 61).

Strategies to prevent STIs

Consistent use of condoms, testing, treatment and partner notification are strategies to prevent STIs.

The Kirby Institute report can be found here: www.kirby.unsw.edu.au/report/annual-surveillance-report-hiv-viral-hepatitis-and-stis-australia-2017.

For information about STIs and safer sex: www.qld.gov.au/health/staying-healthy/sexual-health/sti.

Next edition

The next edition of *In Touch* will be in March 2018.

2018 PLA meeting dates

The PLA Board generally meets on the first Monday of each month. Meeting dates for 2018 are: 5 February, 5 March, 9 April, 14 May, 4 June, 2 July, 6 August, 3 September, 8 October, 5 November, 3 December. *Whilst current at the time of printing, these dates are tentative and subject to change without notice.*

Vacancies for approved manager positions

Miso Honey: Seeking full-time/part-time approved manager. Must be flexible with working hours, honest, enthusiastic and able to multitask. Please contact Shawn on 0423359495.

Utopia in Paradise: Approved manager wanted. Full-time or casual shifts available. Good pay rate and bonuses. Please send resume to utopiainparadise@outlook.com.

Cub 26: Seeking a part-time casual approved manager to join our team to manage the day-to-day running of this Crestmead brothel. Must be experienced, honest, reliable, client focused, and able to multitask. Seeking a person who can work nights and grave shifts on a rotating roster over 7 days. Please email your resume to club26pinkpop@gmail.com or call 3803 1000.

Ding Ding 83: Rocklea brothel seeking a part-time approved manager. Must be honest, reliable, friendly and available to work weekends. Please call 3875 2088.

Please note that approved manager advertisements may be submitted at any time for inclusion in the next edition of the newsletter. They should be emailed to pladmin@iprimus.com.au.