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## **Discrimination focus for World AIDS Day**

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) has highlighted the negative impact of discrimination on public health initiatives to coincide with World AIDS Day. PHAA points out that discrimination impacts not only individuals but also on the health of families and communities by creating barriers for effective education and prevention activities.

“The theme for World AIDS Day 2010 is ‘*Take Action. No Discrimination.*’ The aim is to encourage all Australians to be aware of the prevalence of HIV/AIDS; to take action to reduce the transmission of HIV by promoting safe sex practices; and to accept individuals living with or affected by HIV/AIDS,” said Michael Moore, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the PHAA.

“We need to understand HIV and what it means to be HIV positive to properly support the individuals living with the virus. Through support, we can educate how to prevent HIV transmission. HIV positive people need to be empowered in society to strengthen community spirit, feel included and educate people on HIV and AIDS. They have the right to participate in the community free from stigma and discrimination.

“World AIDS Day is one of the most globally recognised events of the year and is observed across Australia to raise awareness in the community about the issues surrounding HIV/AIDS.

“As with addressing any public health issue, breaking down stereotypes and stopping discrimination are vital measures to ensuring effective education and prevention measures can be developed, delivered and ultimately adopted by the community. Stereotyping and discrimination contribute to myths that create barriers to understanding. In addressing many common public health challenges, such as obesity, breaking down those stereotypes about the type of people who suffer from particular conditions is vital to ensuring that the broader community engages with education and prevention messages.

“Public health problems affect all sectors of the community and it is vital that the entire population participates in implementing solutions to any given challenge. The ‘*Take Action, No Discrimination*’ theme for World AIDS Day this year reflects this,” said Mr Moore.

**For further information/comment:**

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