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MEDIA RELEASE

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NEXT PHASE OF NATIONAL SEXUAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN

The New Year and holiday period is the season of parties and celebration –it’s important to be aware of the risks of unprotected sex.

The second phase of a national campaign aimed at reducing the rate of sexually transmissible infections (STIs) among Australians, especially young people, begins tomorrow.

The message will again be: “STIs are spreading fast – always use a condom”. It will target young people and encourage those who have had unprotected sex to see a doctor to discuss getting tested.

The campaign has resulted from a Rudd Government commitment of \$9.84 million to the National STI Prevention Program to tackle a worrying rise in chlamydia, HIV/AIDS, and syphilis infections.

The first phase of the national awareness campaign, in May and June last year, included advertising on radio, in magazines and on the internet, and outdoor activities such as phone booth highlights, roadside billboards, footpath chalking, street posters and bus side exterior and interior panels. A particularly innovative element was the use in licensed venues of heat sensitive decals applied to urinals.

The second phase will draw on input from the original Campaign Reference Group.

It will also target young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in outer regional and remote communities with locally-tailored and culturally-relevant messages through an Indigenous Communities Sexual Health Communications Program. Links will also be provided to health services within or near those communities.

Funding in 2009-10 of up to \$1.40 million is available for this phase of the national campaign.

Research conducted before phase one of the campaign found that Australians were not well informed about the benefits of condom use. Heterosexuals mainly use condoms to prevent pregnancy, while men who have sex with men are becoming complacent about the risk of HIV.

Phase two of the campaign encourages people to think and talk about STIs. The campaign urges people not to be ashamed if they have an STI, as this can prevent them seeking help and treatment.

Early detection and treatment is important. Chlamydia, for example, is treated easily with antibiotics and treatment can prevent the infection from causing infertility.

If left untreated, STIs can have serious, lasting health implications.

<http://www.sti.health.gov.au>

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister's Office on 0409945476.