

# Media Release



Date: 1 December, 2015

## Hospital urges the community to support HIV positive children this World Aids Day

(December 1, 2015)

This World Aids Day, experts at Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick (SCH) are calling on health professionals, governments and the community to continue advocating for children at risk of and living with HIV, to create a world free of HIV which is safe for all children. World-wide, 35 million people are living with HIV, of which 3.2 million are children.

Dr Brendan McMullan, Infectious Diseases Specialist at SCH says that thanks to advancements in preventative strategies and medical therapies, an increasing number of children infected with HIV are surviving into adulthood.

"In Australia, around 80 children are living with HIV. We look after some of these children here at SCH and support others through outreach and annual camps for kids and families.

"Enormous improvements have been made in preventing HIV infections in children in Australia and throughout the world, through the identification and treatment of pregnant women and attention to safer breastfeeding practices," says Dr McMullan.

"Current prevention strategies can reduce mother to child transmission of HIV from greater than 25% to less than 1%.

"Our service currently supports 20 women and babies to prevent HIV transmission and ensure they have a safe and healthy future. We are confident that many more HIV infections have been and will continue to be prevented, through identification, support and treatment of women living with HIV," added Dr McMullan.

Living with HIV can be difficult for adults let alone children. Children who are infected have less access to medicines to treat HIV than adults and may also be affected by HIV through loss of parents and family support.

Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick is home to NSW's only dedicated paediatric HIV service and is the state-wide lead in the management of paediatric HIV. The service works with children, families and pregnant women living with HIV and is the only service of its kind in Australia to provide medical management, psycho-social support, research, consultation and education to children and families throughout Australia affected by HIV.

**For more information, please contact:**

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The aim of the service is to help affected children and families maintain as normal a life as possible and provide children with the opportunities needed to reach their maximum potential.

The service also provides patient and family support groups for parents and annual national camps, Camp Goodtime - for children and families living with HIV - and Positive Kids Camps - one for HIV positive primary school aged children and another for HIV positive teens.

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## **Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick**

Each year, Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick cares for more than 45,800 seriously ill and injured children from across NSW, Australia and beyond in a family-centred, multidisciplinary, expert environment. Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick is one the country's leading centres in paediatric clinical and research excellence and is part of The Sydney Children's Hospitals Network (SCHN), the largest network of hospital and services for children in Australia.

For more information visit [www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au)

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