

## **HIV & INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS, CHALLENGES & SUCCESSES**

### **Authors:**

Sabri W<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis Service (MHAHS), Sydney, Australia*  
*Wael.Sabri@health.nsw.gov.au*

### **Background:**

Recent NSW HIV notification data suggest there has been an increase in HIV notifications among young men who has sex with men (MSM) from North-East and South-East Asia. Evidence suggests that the number of MSM from Asian background accessing key prevention and testing options such as PrEP and Point of Care Testing for HIV (PoCT) is low compared to rates for Australian born MSM. According to the Department of Education and Training, in the last two years, there has been a 50% increase in the number of international student in NSW. The majority of students are from Australia's closest neighbouring countries, with a particular emphasis on students from China.

Overall, students are single and young and often they come from conservative backgrounds. Understandings of HIV and knowledge of prevention and testing, particularly in an Australian context, are quite low. Given the conservative attitudes in countries of birth and the lack of understanding of personal risk assessment in relation to HIV, there is a concern that some international students could engage in high risk sexual behaviours and unsafe sexual practices.

### **Approach:**

In October 2017, MHAHS initiated a 12 month project to increase the capacity of international students to respond to HIV issues.

This paper outlines the project's multi-strategic approach to reach the diversity of international students. The paper also describes the challenges and the process undertaken to work with private English language providers to access their students.

### **Innovation and Significance:**

This approach to community development demonstrates that community engagement, empowerment and partnership can result in capacity building around HIV among newly arrived population such as international students.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

*The Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis service is a NSW statewide service hosted by Sydney Local Health District, NSW Health.*