

PLANS for supporting people affected by HIV and viral hepatitis in the Loddon Mallee region will be outlined at a community information session in Bendigo on Wednesday.

The session will see representatives from Bendigo Community Health Services, Victorian AIDS Council and Country Awareness Network outline a new partnership focusing on the prevention of blood-borne viruses and sexually transmitted infections.

The organisations will also work to support the LGBTI communities.

The Department of Health and Human Services funded partnership will work to ensure easy access to information and services vital to allow people to look after their health in a safe and inclusive way.

Bendigo Community Health Services CEO Kim Sykes said the levels of blood-borne viruses and sexually transmitted infections remained a concern in the Loddon Mallee region and the risk remained real.

“It’s important we continue to educate the community and raise awareness about STIs, particularly chlamydia. This new partnership will certainly allow us to increase that awareness and education,” Ms Sykes said.

She said Bendigo Community Health Services was looking forward to working in partnership with VAC.

“The best outcomes are achieved when organisations combine their expertise to work towards a common goal,” she said.

“We have worked hard with our primary partners in Bendigo District Aboriginal Co-operative, Women’s Health Loddon Mallee, Bendigo Health Infectious Diseases Service and the Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health for many years and this new partnership allows us to expand further on that good work.

“We believe the expertise of the Victorian AIDS Council combined with our local knowledge, experienced staff and valued partners will further strengthen our ability to make an even greater difference in the prevention of blood-borne viruses and sexually transmitted infections.”

VAC CEO Simon Ruth said the organisation was looking forward to delivering important prevention programs and services to the Loddon Mallee region by engaging with the community.

“The funding is an opportunity for VAC to extend our wide range of programs and support services to the Loddon Mallee region, establishing a greater presence at local venues and events, delivering peer education and support for people living with HIV, and LGBTI communities, distributing targeted information on BBV/STI-prevention and working to reduce stigma,” he said.

“We congratulate CAN on 20 years of work supporting LGBT people and people living with HIV in rural communities. It is vital that LGBTI people living in regional and rural Victoria have access to health services catering specifically to their needs.”

Media contact:

Rod Case
Director, Media and Communications
Bendigo Community Health Services
(03) 5448 1629

0418 147 560

rodcase@bchs.com.au