

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

#### **Kirby Institute study will explore the impact of drug use among gay and bisexual men**

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA (13 October 2014) – The Kirby Institute at UNSW is recruiting gay and bisexual men living in Australia to participate in a study exploring what influences their attitudes and decisions about drug use, how these change over time, and the consequences of their drug use – good and bad.

“Much has been said about drug use among gay and bisexual men in the media recently, but there has been little research done on this issue in Australia and few opportunities to ask gay and bisexual men about these issues except in relation to HIV risk,” says Professor Garrett Prestage, chief investigator of the study at the Kirby Institute. “Factors influencing drug use and its consequences may differ for men depending on their private or social lives, and they may change over time. This study will help give our community that information.”

The “Flux” study ([Following Lives Undergoing Change](#)) is administered by the Kirby Institute, in close collaboration with NDARC (the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre), CSRH (Centre for Social Research in Health), ARCSHS (Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society), ACON, VAC (Victorian AIDS Council), and NUAA (NSW Users and AIDS Association).

Researchers will enrol 1400 men in the cohort study, which will provide valuable information for sexual health promotion and sexual infection prevention efforts within the community, as well as other organisations in the health care system with a relevant interest in these areas.

Participants of the study will participate in an online survey every six months for two years. The survey will take up to 25-40 minutes. The interview includes sections on general demographics, sexuality, pleasure, sexual behaviour, attachment to the gay community, drug use, sexual health, mental health and knowledge and attitudes towards HIV.

To be eligible to participate in this study, participants must:

- Be male, currently living in Australia;
- Be 16 years and 6 months of age or older;
- Have had sex with another man in the preceding 12 months OR identify as homosexual or bisexual;
- Be willing to consent to the study requirements

“To do this right, we need all sorts of gay and bisexual men to participate,” says Professor Prestage. “We need to hear from men who have never taken drugs and those who take drugs all the time; those who feel connected to gay community life, and those who have nothing to do with it; those who have close gay friendship networks, and those who have no gay friends. Only by hearing from a broad range of men can we ensure that community organisations and services can respond to everyone's needs.”

The Flux study is funded by the Australian Research Council

### **Stakeholder quotes:**

“The Flux study is our opportunity to obtain data about the impact of drugs on our community, and what gay men do to support each other. We have needed this information for a very long time.” ~Colin Batrouney, Victorian AIDS Council

“ACON, VAC and NUAA have joined together to support this important study. We believe it will help our community to better respond to the issues of drug use and support among gay men, and we encourage gay men to join the study.” ~Karen Price (ACON), Colin Batrouney (VAC), and Nicky Bath (NUAA)

### **Contacts:**

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(All queries and participation will remain strictly confidential)

