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MEDIA RELEASE



AUSTRALIA'S LEADING DESIGNERS SUPPORT WORLD AIDS DAY

Brisbane fashionistas will be able to get their hands on exclusive fashion accessories from some of Australia's leading designers at the Queensland's World AIDS Day RED lunch on Tuesday 1 December at the Conrad Treasury Hotel.

International designers Dinosaur Designs, Dolly Rockers, George Wu and Chelsea De Luca have teamed with Australia's fashion elite including Peter Lang, Kirstin Ash, Paul Hunt, Daniel Lightfoot, Paula Kyle Walden and Alannah Hill to design an exclusive accessory in red, the colour of the global fight against AIDS.

Project Runway's Leigh Buchanan, who will host the event, said that, as a well-known Australian, he chose to participate in the event as he believed prominent Australians had a responsibility to raise awareness of those living with HIV/AIDS.

"People from all walks of life are affected by HIV and AIDS and tragically the number of those infected continues to grow," Buchanan said. "I strongly believe we all have a responsibility to do what we can do to support the fight against the spread of HIV, especially those of us in positions of influence.

"Being in a privileged position means we are able to direct public opinion and we should all take up that challenge, which is why the designers jumped at the chance to design their own red accessory," he said.

Designer Kirstin Ash urged all Australians to support the fight against AIDS. "Prevention is the answer," she said. "Education and awareness are vital in stopping this disease. Please buy a ribbon to assist in fighting HIV and AIDS".

Queensland Positive People General Manager, Simon O'Connor, said the theme of the 2009 World Aids Day reflected the need to fight against the discrimination that those living with HIV and AIDS still face.

"After all the successes and advances we have made in the treatment of HIV, it's disappointing that people living with HIV are still being discriminated against. Discrimination leads to more than just a bad day. It takes a pervasive toll on the physical, mental and emotional well-being of people living with HIV who already have enough to deal with managing a chronic illness.

"This World AIDS Day, we call for discrimination to be challenged and ended whenever and wherever it is encountered."

All the funds raised from the Queensland's World AIDS Day RED lunch will go to The Hope Fund.

In 2008, 167 Queenslanders were diagnosed with HIV infection. This is the highest number of HIV notifications reported since 1984.

However, the annual number of new AIDS diagnoses continues to decrease, as does the number of deaths from AIDS. This may be due to the use of effective antiretroviral treatment.

O'Connor is encouraging the people of Brisbane to join in events to celebrate the lives of those lost to AIDS and help raise awareness of the continuing battle against the spread of HIV.

"I encourage everyone this World AIDS Day to show your support: wear a red ribbon, talk to your friends and work colleagues about HIV or make a donation to an AIDS charity. Knowledge, compassion and action are the strongest weapons we have in the fight against HIV."

The aim of World AIDS Day is to raise consciousness in the community about HIV/AIDS issues, including the need for support and understanding for people living with HIV/AIDS, and the need for the development of education and prevention initiatives.

This year theme, Take Action. No Discrimination will be the focus of WORLD AIDS Day 2009.

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