

# Activist hits out at 'weak' Aids work

Support services are needed, not balloons, streamers and carnivals, he says. **Andrew Huige** reports

**T**he Aids activist Mike Sinclair used the opening of a new wing of the Hong Kong Aids Foundation headquarters yesterday as a platform to attack the foundation for being ineffective in the fight against the disease.

Meanwhile, experts were predicting the number of Aids cases in Hong Kong will skyrocket into the thousands before the end of the decade.

"I was an education officer at the foundation for two years and in my opinion they have failed to achieve anything of significance," Sinclair, who was attending an opening ceremony to christen the new wing of the HKAF headquarters in the Shau Kei Wan Jockey Club Clinic, said.

The new facilities include a library, activity room and a volunteers room, and cost about \$300,000.

"I think the money would have been better spent on services," Sinclair said. "I would like to see this organisation closed down and see the resources given to Aids Concern, which is much more effective providing support services and is not a civil service."

The chairman of the foundation, Dr Leong Che-hung, said contrary to Sinclair's claims, the HKAF does offer services, and plans to expand them in the future with the help of the new wing. "How can you provide services without facilities?" asked Leong.

While Hong Kong Aids organisations struggle to come to grips with the disease, the scale of the problem they are facing is growing every day, according to figures announced yesterday by the Hong Kong Advisory Council on Aids.

Professor James Chin, a professor of epidemiology at the University of California, Berkeley, and a recognised Aids researcher, said his projections indicate a worst case scenario of 12,000 HIV carriers in the territory by 2000.

"Within a few years Hong Kong can expect several hundred Aids cases to be occurring every year," Chin said.

Based on current figures Chin estimates there could be as many as 450 new cases of Aids reported per year as 2000 approaches. He said there would be about 250 cases of Aids in Hong Kong in 1994, although only 130 have been re-

ported so far. About 3,000 HIV carriers are thought to live in the territory.

Chin said that if a thorough and comprehensive education programme was instituted, the numbers he projected might be reduced by 30 to 40 per cent.

Chin also echoed concerns voiced by Sinclair about Aids education in Hong Kong.

"You need the blanket education but you need to go beyond that to see if behaviour change has been effected," Chin said.

Sinclair was critical of current Aids education because it fails to target individuals.

"It seems they are keeping the issue sweet and nice," Sinclair said. "They shouldn't be using balloons and streamers. I don't think it gets the message across. They think Aids is all fun and carnivals."

Literature with explicit photographs of vaginal and anal intercourse or oral sex are not needed, Sinclair said, but talking directly to the people who engage in such activities is the most effective way to stop the disease.

"We are going to have to push the barriers a little bit," Sinclair said.