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Inquiry into Suicide in Australia

The Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO) is the peak body for Australia's community sector response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. AFAO is charged with representing the views of its members: the AIDS Councils in each state and territory, the National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS (NAPWA), the Australian Illicit and Injecting Drug Users League, Scarlet Alliance - the national organisation representing sex workers, and the Anwernekenhe National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HIV Alliance (ANA). AFAO advocates for its member organisations, promotes medical and social research into HIV/AIDS and its effects, develops and formulates policy on HIV/AIDS issues, and provides HIV policy advice to the Commonwealth Government.

I am writing on behalf of AFAO in support of the submission to be lodged by the National LGBT Health Alliance (the Alliance) in respect of this Inquiry. AFAO has had the opportunity to read the Alliance's submission, which will be finalised and lodged by 4 December. We concur with the points made in the submission and strongly endorse the Alliance's recommendations.

We have long sought for better funding for research into the social determinants of health so as to develop strategies targeting Australians most in need. The Alliance's submission to the Inquiry into Suicide clearly sets out the overwhelming evidence of disproportionately high rates of mental illness, self-harm, suicidal ideation and suicide among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and inter-sex (LGBTI) Australians, and the evidence that the fundamental causes of these high rates are stigmatisation, discrimination and violence. While mainstream health promotion campaigns are appropriate at times, the success of Australia's partnership response to the HIV epidemic has shown that the impact of well researched, targeted health promotion cannot be overestimated. Given the alarmingly high rates of self-harm and suicide among Australia's LGBTI communities, there is a pressing need for suicide prevention strategies that specifically target LGBTI people. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government for its decision to undertake this important Inquiry.

Yours faithfully

Don Baxter
Executive Director