

Increased Rates of HIV Infections - National Action Plan to address the Rises in HIV Infections

25 March 2005, endorsed by IGCAHRD 5 April 2005

Introduction

After a decade of decreasing rates of HIV infections in all states/territories (except Victoria) the data for calendar 2002 saw significantly increased rates in NSW (15%), Queensland (20%) and a further 6% in Victoria. Other jurisdictions subsequently reported increases. Queensland will report a further 19% rise for calendar 2004. This signals a potentially fundamental change in the direction of the epidemic in Australia. This challenge calls for the development and implementation of a vigorous, co-ordinated national response involving both short and long-term measures.

Scope and Objectives

This Action Plan is focused on those contexts in which risk of HIV transmission or acquisition is considered highest.

Accordingly, the programs in this Action Plan will focus on gay and homosexually active men who reside or socialise within the major urban centres of Australia. This is not intended to detract from work undertaken with other populations (including other populations of gay men) but rather is intended to focus activities and resources on those populations where incidence and prevalence are highest and where there are the most urgent imperatives for additional or new initiatives.

The aim of the Action Plan is to **reduce new HIV infections among gay and other homosexually active men.**

Objectives

This Action Plan provides the framework for developing a **coordinated national response to the increase in HIV notifications**, in order to:

- Provide gay men with information, skills and equipment to reduce HIV acquisition/transmission during sex;
- Increase the rate of consistent safe sex among gay men;
- Reduce new STI infections and increase diagnosis and treatment of existing STIs;
- Increase the proportion of at-risk individuals who have regular HIV and STI tests; and
- Build the capacity of health services and General Practice to address HIV prevention with gay and homosexually active men.

Action Plan

This Action Plan will provide the framework for activities in the following areas:

1. Develop national consensus on addressing the Rises and establish mechanisms for on-going co-ordination
2. Communicating with gay men about current prevention issues
3. Supporting GPs and sexual health services to address HIV prevention
4. Addressing sexually transmitted infections

Objective 1. Develop national consensus on addressing the Rises and establish mechanisms for on-going co-ordination

Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress/Comment (at 13 Mar 05)
1.1. MACASHH & IGCAHRD briefing on epidemiology and social research	MACASHH/DHA	By 2 August 05	Epi briefing not yet done. Data indicates decline from 2002 peak but still above 2001- except 19% rise in Qld.
1.2. A more detailed Mapping activities report analysing HIV prevention activities aimed at gay-MSM to be undertaken by AFAO and IGCARD in association with DHA, allowing gaps to be identified and programs adjusted.	AFAO IGCAHRD and DHA	By 30 June 05	Tender brief prepared; funding being finalised. Estimated completion date: 31 May
1.3. National forum of key stake-holders to be conducted	MACASHH/DHA	By 31 August 05	No progress
1.4. Advice to Minister by MACASHH on response to the Rises	AFAO	By 31 March 05	Minister briefed (partially) at AFAO/NAPWA meeting with him on 10 March 05); follow-up briefing on Actions to be done post-March MACASHH meeting

1.5 National Action Plan endorsed (including Roles and responsibilities for co-ordination and implementation)	HIV Partnership	By 23 March 05	On agenda for MACASHH HASTI meeting on 22 March 05
1.6 National forum of key stakeholders to review progress on implementation of National Action Plan	HIV Partnership	By 31 October 05	For discussion at HASTI November 05 meeting

Objective 2. Communicating with gay men about current prevention issues

Activity area	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress & Comments (at 13 March 05)
2.1. Increase advertisements and articles in gay media	AFAO & AIDS Council		Has occurred in some states but funding not sustained (except NSW)
2.2. Investigate development and delivery of mainstream social marketing aimed at gay men, including TV ads (carefully placed)	DHA, States & Territories, AFAO	By 30 June 05	NSW has some TV ad.s
2.3. Implement elements of the AFAO Rises In New Infections national campaign in co-ordination with AIDS Councils	AFAO and AIDS Councils	From 1 March 05 -	Most Drafts now approved and in production; Qld and WA have commenced elements
2.4. Develop internet-based 'awareness' interventions and implement	AFAO	By 31 May 05	In development
2.5. Develop and implement prevention messages targeted to HIV+ men	AFAO, NAPWA	By 31 May 05	In production
2.6. Identify gaps in communications programs targeting gay/MSMs using Mapping Exercise and Infrastructure Benchmarks documents	States/Territories	By 30 June 05	Phase 2 Mapping exercise to be completed and analysed by 30 June 05

2.7. Provide funding to AIDS Councils and PLWHA groups to implement communication strategies to gay/MSMs	States/Territories	By 31 May 05	NSW and Vic but only on one-off basis
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Objective 3. Supporting GPs and sexual health services to address HIV prevention

Activity area	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress / Comments
3.1. Conduct consultation and support meetings of key GPs and sexual health service staff to promote and facilitate HIV prevention activities in their consultations	State/Territory Health Dept.s	By 31 May 05	NSW has done. Others: ??

Objective 4. Addressing sexually transmitted infections

Activity area	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress / Comments
4.1. Remove structural barriers which discourage straight-forward, regular STI testing for gay men	Minister &/or DHA; MACASHH to recommend	By June 30	Discussed at Dec 04 MACASHH HASTI. Actions not clear.
4.2. Upgrade gay men's knowledge of STIs and their potential role in HIV transmission through further national campaign(s)	AFAO & AIDS Councils	By 30 June 05	In production through ANET 04/05 contract.
4.3. Adopt the ACSHP's 'Clinical guidelines for management of STIs in priority populations'	MACASHH & DHA	By 31 March 05	On MACASHH HASTI agenda for March 05 meeting
4.4. Promote regular STI testing for gay men (both HIV+ and HIV-)	AFAO & AIDS Councils; GPs	On-going	Comprehensive campaigns in NSW and Vic; sporadic implementation
4.5. Develop and implement an education program to upgrade HIV sector staff knowledge and expertise on STI's	ASHM, ACSHP	By 30 June 05	Progress unclear