

COMMUNITY LED EFFORTS

Safe sex and Australian travellers

OBJECTIVES

- To prevent new HIV infections; and
- To improve uptake of testing and treatment among those who may acquire HIV while travelling.

CURRENT ISSUES

- Over 8 million Australians depart the nation each year to travel overseas. This includes individuals travelling for leisure, work and visiting the country of their birth;
- Australians travelling overseas face unique risks in relation to HIV: they may be travelling to a context (either a country or a specific community within a country) with a higher prevalence of HIV, be less inhibited and more inclined to risk-taking while travelling, and assume that behaviour that is low-risk in Australia is low-risk overseas;
- While complete data is not available, it is well-established that mobility is implicated

- in around 50% of new diagnoses among heterosexuals; and that there are sub-populations of gay men who are at heightened risk of HIV acquisition when travelling, including Asian gay men;
- Moreover, travellers may not be aware of the range of strategies that could reduce their risk of HIV acquisition, including condom-protected sex and Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP);
- Australians who acquire HIV in the context of travel are also at risk of later diagnosis and therefore delayed access to treatment and care. They may consider themselves personally at low-risk of acquiring HIV and therefore

- be less likely to request or be offered HIV testing at seroconversion, and they may be less knowledgeable about how to access testing, treatment and care either while travelling or upon return to Australia;
- Taken together, these factors can place individuals at risk of poorer health outcomes, and may increase the risk of onward transmission of undiagnosed HIV;
- Despite the role of mobility in HIV acquisition and delayed access to diagnosis and treatment, travellers are not currently a priority population for any part of the community-led or public health response.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

- The most efficient modality for addressing travel-related HIV is via targeted communications saturating those settings relevant for travellers;

- This requires a concentrated effort with broad reach as opposed to highly localised responses;

- It is anticipated that the campaign would incorporate social media and traditional social marketing channels, with key messages including prevention, testing and treatment.

IMPACT

- Reduce preventable infections;
- Improve uptake of testing and treatment among travellers who acquire HIV; and
- Reduce onward HIV transmission from people with undiagnosed HIV.

COST-BENEFIT

This investment will contribute to the secondary prevention of poorer health outcomes among people with HIV, thus reducing pressure on primary care and public health, and reduce late diagnoses and the health care costs associated with late diagnosis.

ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT

\$400,000 per annum