

MEDIA RELEASE

\$32.5 MILLION ANNUALLY FOR NEW EFFORT WOULD END AUSTRALIAN HIV TRANSMISSION

A comprehensive, costed plan to make Australia the first nation to end HIV transmission will be presented to parliamentarians tomorrow.

The Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations' *HIV Blueprint* charts a course to avert 2,025 HIV transmissions within three years. The plan would require additional annual investment of \$32.5 million, with the Commonwealth Government offsetting those costs in a few short years. By 2020 alone, \$82 million would be saved from the costs of providing treatment and support.

The financial benefit to the Commonwealth would continue to compound thereafter, with lifetime savings from the first 2,025 averted infections exceeding \$2 billion. The *HIV Blueprint* is built on modelling by researchers at the Burnet Institute.

The *HIV Blueprint* highlights the additional effort needed to end HIV transmission in Australia. This requires investment in:

- developing national education programs for local delivery by peer based organisations;
- increasing the focus on 'hidden' populations at risk, including people with late diagnoses or unsuspected HIV;
- communicating the benefits of the once-a-day HIV prevention pill, PrEP;
- promoting HIV rapid testing and, once registered, HIV self-testing;
- developing a media and communication strategy to promote safe sex and testing among Australians having sex while travelling;
- implementing a sustained HIV response among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- improving the expertise and knowledge of the HIV workforce;
- unlocking big data from the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and Medicare Benefits Schedule and improving program evaluation.

“Australia is at an inflection point. HIV transmission has plateaued at approximately one thousand notifications per year for the past five years. Yet the capacity to end HIV transmission is within reach. Just as we led the world in containing HIV in the 1980s, we can now lead the world in ending transmission,” said Darryl O’Donnell, chief executive officer of the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations.

“To reach a goal this worthwhile and ambitious will take great effort. We won’t get there through business as usual. Most of all, it means we must provide greater support for communities working to end HIV transmission.

“A range of exciting new technology is becoming available, but unless we promote the benefits of this, we won’t defeat this epidemic.

AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF AIDS ORGANISATIONS

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“Ending HIV transmission is the right thing to do. Many thousands of Australians will be spared the stigma and discrimination that continues to flourish in the shadows of this virus.

“It makes extraordinary financial sense. If we invest to end HIV transmission now, we will enjoy huge net savings over time. The compounding benefit over the lifetime of these averted transmissions is more than \$2 billion.

“There is no single solution to HIV transmission and medicine alone won’t end the epidemic. It requires investment in prevention, testing and treatment programs and workforce support. HIV community organisations have the expertise and motivation to provide governments with a powerful ally in ending an epidemic.”

The *HIV Blueprint* has been endorsed by 29 community, clinical and research organisations, reflecting an overwhelming expert consensus for the efforts needed to end HIV transmission.

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- **Note to editors:**

The funding package proposed is ***additional*** to existing funding for HIV prevention, testing, treatment and research. This proposal does not include provision for PBS listing of PrEP, which the Commonwealth has already committed to in the event one of the two applications being considered by PBAC is recommended for approval.

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The Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO) is the national federation for the HIV community response. AFAO's members are the AIDS Councils in each state and territory; the National Association of People With HIV Australia (NAPWHA); the Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL); Anwernekenhe National HIV Alliance (ANA); and Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association.