

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **HIV prevention pill available on PBS from April 1**

The HIV prevention pill, PrEP, will be available on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme from April 1, giving Australia its greatest opportunity yet to drive serious reductions in HIV transmission.

The Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations has applauded the Health Minister, the Hon. Greg Hunt's decision to approve PrEP for the PBS, following a positive recommendation by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee last month.

PrEP is 99 per cent effective at preventing HIV transmission among gay and bisexual men. It will be available to people at high risk of HIV at a cost of \$39.50 per month (General Patients), with users receiving a three month prescription and a sexual health check each time they visit their GP.

Today's announcement represents a significant advance in the HIV response. Until now access to PrEP has been patchy. The full commercial cost has been prohibitively expensive, with Australian PrEP users mainly accessing it through state and territory trials.

"Having PrEP available at an affordable price through the PBS is a huge advance," said Darryl O'Donnell, chief executive of the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations. "This will drive a substantial reduction in transmission and allow us to turbo-charge the Australian HIV response. This medicine is astoundingly effective and the Australian Government is to be congratulated for being one of the world's first to make it available through public subsidy.

"This announcement continues Australian leadership on HIV, with Australia having been the first country in the world to commit to a goal of virtually eliminating HIV transmission, by 2020.

"PrEP is an essential piece of the puzzle, but to drive HIV to very low levels, we will need co-ordinated leadership and additional resources for the Australian HIV response. We have every opportunity ahead of us, but it will take great determination and effort.

"We will need to ensure all those who can benefit from PrEP know of its availability and can consider whether this prevention tool is right for them.

"Investment in HIV prevention makes excellent financial sense. Each averted HIV transmission saves the Australian taxpayer \$1,000,000 in lifetime costs.

"Australia has taken a huge step forward with today's decision to list PrEP on the pharmaceutical benefits scheme. The challenge now is to capitalise on this progress."

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