

MEDIA RELEASE

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Self testing adds momentum to HIV prevention effort

The approval of Australia's first HIV self-test will add momentum to the HIV prevention effort by making testing more accessible, the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations said today.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration approved the Australian devised and manufactured Atomo HIV Self Test late yesterday. The single use rapid fingerprick test is expected to be available for online purchase for approximately \$30 within three months.

"Sadly, stigma and embarrassment still prevents many people testing for HIV. The arrival of this self testing device is a critical step in removing a barrier to people knowing their status," said Darryl O'Donnell, chief executive officer of the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations. "Self testing will add significant momentum to Australian HIV prevention efforts. Once people know they are HIV positive, they can commence treatment which keeps them well and prevents transmission to others."

Mr O'Donnell also welcomed Health Minister, Greg Hunt's release of the eighth National HIV Strategy with accompanying investment.

"The community-led HIV response welcomes Minister Hunt's commitment to virtual elimination of HIV transmission by 2022. This is an ambitious goal, but with co-operation and determination, it is certainly achievable," Mr O'Donnell said.

Minister Hunt made the announcement at a parliamentary breakfast in Canberra to mark this Saturday's World AIDS Day.

AFAO also welcomed the Federal Labor Party's commitment to invest in national HIV community organisations to drive consistent policy, public communication campaigns and the skills of the HIV workforce should it form government.

"Catherine King's commitment to new funding would provide a serious boost to HIV prevention by scaling-up HIV efforts," Mr O'Donnell said.

Australia made serious strides in HIV prevention this year, with national data recording the lowest level of HIV transmission since 2010.

This trend is expected to continue in 2019 as more people at risk of HIV begin to use the prevention medicine PrEP, which is now available on the PBS.

The HIV prevention effort in Australia's region, Asia and the Pacific, poses a continuing challenge. According to UNAIDS data released ahead of World AIDS Day, approximately 5.2 million people are living with HIV in the region and only a little more than half (2.7 million) have access to life-saving antiretroviral

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medicine.

Globally, 36.9 people are living with HIV, with 21.7 million accessing antiretroviral medicine. AFAO believes Australia should commit at least \$250 million to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, when it holds its replenishment conference next year.

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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 and former AIDS Councils in each state and territory; the National Association of People With HIV Australia (NAPWHA); the Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL); Anwemekenhe National HIV Alliance (ANA); and Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association.