



ERADICATING HIV/AIDS

The Australian Greens will:

1. Implement the National Strategies and strengthen Australia's response to HIV
2. Develop a plan to ensure that all Australians have access to treatment
3. Ensure that researchers are able to continue to progress the knowledge base around HIV and other blood borne viruses
4. Challenge stigma and discrimination
5. Ensure that other countries in our region are able to take action to fight AIDS and other key illnesses and that LGBTIQ+ organisations are supported.

Overview

We have the chance to end HIV transmission in Australia, improve access to treatment and challenge stigma and discrimination. But in order for this to happen we need concerted and ongoing action. Australia's reputation as a world leader in this area is slipping as we have failed to take the necessary actions and make sufficient investment to see an end to this epidemic. In response from ongoing calls from the sector, the Greens will:

One: Implement the National Strategies and Strengthen Australia's response to HIV

While there are current strategies on HIV, STIs, Hepatitis B and C and specific strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander blood-borne viruses and STI strategies, these policies have not been followed through or implemented. The Australian Greens will work to ensure that these are implemented and funded.

The Greens fully support the enduring principles of partnership, harm reduction and non-partisanship. In addition, the Greens believe in a strong and effective civil society, and recognise that the community based and peer-led work of AFAO, NAPHWA and their partners is crucial in ensuring the fight to eliminate HIV maintains momentum and focus.

We need a national response to eradicating HIV, and specialist organisations must be well funded to do the work. The Greens will invest \$10m a year into organisations that work on prevention, testing and treatment campaigns, peer support, education and community outreach, planning and service re-development.

The Greens know that particular populations are at risk of being left behind, including people with unsuspected HIV, late HIV presenters and those who are not being treated. Because these groups are unlikely to be receptive to awareness and media campaigns that are targeted at more engaged populations, we will commit \$3 million per year to develop these campaigns.

Two: Work to ensure that all Australians have access to treatment

Recently released national data highlighted a 33% increase in new HIV diagnosis rates among First Nations peoples. In the same period, newly diagnosed HIV rates among Australian-born

non-Indigenous people decreased by 22%. The Greens will work to ensure that we have a plan to implement and sustain a response to HIV and STIs among this population in response to these alarming rates.

The Greens will invest \$15m a year to help close this health gap and ensure the needs of all First Nations peoples, including brotherboys, sistergirls and gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people are met in public health prevention efforts and service provision. We will include requirements in this funding allocation to ensure that this funding is culturally appropriate for and community controlled by First Nations peoples.

The Greens will also commit \$1.75 million per year to develop evidence-informed and long-term community-led campaigns to reduce the incidence of STIs.

The Greens recognise the importance of rapid HIV testing and note the recent development of effective tests in this area. While we strongly support the independence of the Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC) process, we would in principle support MBS listing of self testing if recommended by MSAC.

People who are ineligible to access Medicare face a wide range of challenges to accessing healthcare in Australia. This is particularly problematic for people who are unable to access HIV treatment and PrEP, because of the risks to both themselves and the broader population who are placed at risk through people not being protected. The Greens would support the development and implementation of a sustainable model of access to HIV treatment and PrEP for people in this situation.

Another barrier for accessing HIV treatment for Australians is the number of clinicians who are able to prescribe HIV treatment and a paucity of clinical training and support in this area. The Australian Greens would work to overcome this problem by working with the medical and health sector to understand what the unmet needs in this area are and to ensure they are adequately supported for this.

Three: Ensure that researchers are able to continue to progress the knowledge base around HIV and other blood borne viruses, including community surveillance

It is clear that the rise in infectious diseases, including HIV and blood-borne viruses in Australia and around the world warrants prioritisation by Australia's medical research bodies. The Greens would ensure these infections are prioritised by the NHMRC and MRFF.

We would also work with the research community and the Department of Health to ensure that appropriately de-identified PBS data is made available to enable comprehensive observation of PrEP initiation and patterns of use across Australia. To ensure that the community sector has adequate support to undertake high quality and timely HIV surveillance across the nation, we would provide \$400 000 per annum.

Four: Challenge stigma and discrimination

The Greens will commit an additional \$1m a year into specific communications and campaigns that break down stigma and discrimination, encourage safer sex and encourage early testing.

Regulatory and legal changes are also required to ensure that there is uniformity across states and territories, and to ensure best practice science in regulation and practice. We would pursue these objectives through:

- Directing the Australian Law Reform Commission to report on options to increase uniformity between state and territory laws on HIV, given developments in HIV prevention science;
- Implementing the Australian Red Cross Blood Service's recommendations to reduce the sexual activity deferral period. The Greens believe that the recommendation of

the Australian Red Cross Blood Service to reduce the period of deferral for men who have had recent sex with another man (MSM) should be adopted. The Greens believe the maintenance of this restriction contravenes the available evidence and represents unnecessary discrimination.

Five: Ensure that other countries in our region are able to take action to fight AIDS and other key illnesses and that LGBTIQ+ organisations are supported

The Greens recognise Australia's role in our region in providing support and funding to regional responses to HIV and for maintaining strong and effective partnerships between community organisations in Australia and amongst our neighbours. The Greens would restore the funding to these crucial programs to ensure that the fight to eliminate HIV can continue in the region.

The Greens understand the role of Australia in sending a clear message to the world and our region that funding to eliminate HIV should be prioritised, through contributing to the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria. And we recognise that Australia's contribution to the Global Fund is critical, with the Fund providing US\$15 for every US dollar committed by Australia, totalling US\$2.9 billion from 2014- 2016. The Greens will commit \$300 million over the next three years from Australia's development budget to set a strong example and ensure the Fund can continue its work in a sustainable and consistent way. We would allocate \$15 million of this over three years specifically for strengthened community responses to HIV in Asia and the Pacific.

As a world leader in the HIV/AIDS prevention space, Australia has an important role to play in global leadership on this issue. The Australian Greens will commit to Australia playing a leading role in the 2021 United Nations General Assembly's High-Level Meeting on HIV and AIDS, including support for participation by people living with HIV/AIDS and civil society in the meeting, and in the negotiation of an updated UN Declaration of Commitment to Ending HIV.

To practically support this commitment, we will also support the establishment of a network of LGBTIQ+ organisations, development agencies, human rights organisations, philanthropy and academia to promote and protect the rights of LGBTIQ+ people regionally and across the globe through an investment of \$200 000 per annum.



SENATOR DR RICHARD DI NATALE
Leader of the Australian Greens, Spokesperson for Health

Tel: 03 9654 0430 senator.dinatale@aph.gov.au

greens.org.au