

MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AFAO applauds Minister Hunt's call for Asia-Pacific TB eradication

The Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations strongly endorses Health Minister Greg Hunt's call to eradicate tuberculosis in the Asia Pacific within a decade.

Minister Hunt made the call at this week's Global Health Security conference, currently being held in Sydney.

TB and HIV co-infection is a serious health problem as each disease speeds the progress of the other. In Papua New Guinea, the situation is even more difficult due to the emergence of resistance to treatment for both conditions.

In 2017, there were 960 cases of extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB) in Papua New Guinea. A recent surveillance study of individuals who had recently acquired HIV found 16.1 per cent had pre-treatment resistance to frontline antiretroviral medicine.

"Papua New Guinea faces one of the world's greatest challenges when it comes to HIV and TB drug resistance," said Darryl O'Donnell, CEO of the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations. "This is made all the more difficult by the fact HIV and TB often accelerate through co-infection.

"Minister Hunt's call to eradicate TB in our region is a moment of profound leadership. Both TB and HIV are diseases that thrive on poverty and stigma. However, they are also entirely preventable and treatable.

"Australian experience, expertise and financial support must be leveraged to convert the Minister's aspiration into reality and alleviate suffering for hundreds of thousands of people across our region."

AFAO also welcomed Minister Hunt's comments on anti-microbial resistance, which he described as "perhaps the most concerning of all the emerging threats and challenges."

"We have every opportunity to make greater progress on HIV, TB and other infectious diseases challenges in Australia and our region. It's essential we do both as infectious diseases don't respect borders," said Mr O'Donnell.

In support of this goal, AFAO and other leading Australian HIV and TB organisations have called on the Australian Government to pledge \$300m over three years for the upcoming replenishment of the Global Fund to Fight HIV, TB and Malaria.

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Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations

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The Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO) is the national federation for the HIV community response in Australia. AFAO works to end HIV transmission and reduce its impact on communities in Australia, Asia and the Pacific. AFAO's members are the AIDS Councils in each state and territory; the National Association of People with HIV Australia (NAPWA); the Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL); the Anwernekenhe National HIV Alliance (ANA); and Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association. AFAO's affiliate member organisations – spanning community, research, public health and clinical workforce – share AFAO's values and support the work we do.