

A close-up photograph of several blue, oval-shaped pills, likely Truvada, scattered across the page. The pills are in sharp focus in the foreground, with others blurred in the background.

Australian PrEP roundup

August 2016

There has been a lot of excitement about the new HIV prevention pill known as PrEP or pre-exposure prophylaxis. Sometimes referred to by its brand name – Truvada – PrEP has been found to be highly effective in preventing HIV transmission through sex when taken by HIV-negative people.

PrEP is now accessible through a number of different avenues, depending on where you live, and/or individual preferences. Not all ways of accessing PrEP are ideal, and access options can be confusing. Some state governments have shown great leadership in proactively establishing large-scale access through PrEP studies. However, other state governments have failed to progress access. This information is intended to be a tool for people who want to advocate for better local access to PrEP. At the end of this paper, there are also useful referrals to more information about how individuals can obtain PrEP, including contacts for local AIDS Councils.

1) When will PrEP be funded by the Government?

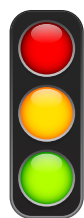
PrEP not recommended by Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee for listing

It is very disappointing that the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) did not recommend the listing of PrEP on the PBS on 19 August. In releasing their decision, the PBAC has said they accept the importance of PrEP but were unable to recommend it for a number of reasons, including the cost-effectiveness of the price submitted by Gilead Sciences. Despite this setback, AFAO will continue with community advocacy to have Gilead Sciences resubmit its application as soon as possible. Gilead Sciences, as sponsor, should also provide the HIV community with a clear explanation as to why its application failed, what its strategy is regarding the availability of PrEP in Australia, and the prospect of future applications to the PBAC to fund PrEP.

Interim PrEP access arrangements remain crucial in the meantime; these arrangements vary around the country, and are outlined on the following pages.

2) Interim access around Australia

The following table provides an overview of current PrEP access arrangements. We have adopted traffic light classifications to indicate the amount of progress in relation to PrEP access:






red indicates little progress

amber indicates moderate progress, and

green indicates significant progress.

State/Territory	What's going on	Responsible authority
Australian Capital Territory	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACT Health has announced that it will fund 200 places for people in the ACT for access to the EPIC-NSW study. It is hoped that this trial will commence in late September/October 2016. 	<p>The Hon. Meegan Fitzharris, Assistant Minister for Health 02 6205 0022 fitzharris@act.gov.au GPO Box 1020, Canberra ACT 2601</p>
New South Wales	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EPIC-NSW, a NSW Government funded PrEP study, commenced in March 2016 with 3,700 places available in metropolitan and regional NSW. By early August, approximately 2,600 people have enrolled. Access is free. ACON is supporting the implementation of the study and can provide advice on alternate access options to anyone who is not eligible to enrol. 	<p>The Hon. Jillian Skinner MP, Minister for Health 02 8574 5700 https://www.nsw.gov.au/ministercontactform/ministerhealth GPO Box 5341, Sydney NSW 2001</p>
Northern Territory	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is possible to get a PrEP prescription through the CDC Sexual Health Clinic in Darwin, with individuals then importing the drug themselves (see next section regarding self-importation). The Northern Territory Department of Health has not announced any funding for PrEP access arrangements but will review the situation when the outcomes of the Australian PrEP studies are known. 	<p>The Hon. Johan (John) Wessel Elferink MIA, Minister for Health 08 8928 6615 minister.elferink@nt.gov.au GPO Box 3146, State Square, Darwin NT 0801</p>
Queensland	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In April 2016, Queensland Health announced an expansion of the QPrEP study to up to 2,000 people. There is no confirmed starting date. Access will be free. The Queensland AIDS Council (QuAC) is gathering names of interested people and continuing to provide peer-navigator support for personal importation. The QPrEPd operational team at Cairns Sexual Health Service or the Queensland AIDS Council can be contacted for further support. 	<p>The Hon. Cameron Dick MP, Minister for Health 07 3445 4100 health@ministerial.qld.gov.au GPO Box 48, Brisbane QLD 4001</p>
South Australia	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Australia's sexual health clinic, Clinic 275, is not prescribing PrEP. South Australia Health is preparing an operational directive to guide clinicians in the public system to prescribe PrEP. At the O'Brien St General Practice, a high case-load GP practice with specialist s100 prescribers, individuals can get a PrEP script and then import the drug through the personal importation scheme (see next section regarding self-importation). At this time, only one prescriber at O'Brien Street is prescribing PrEP. 	<p>The Hon. Jack Snelling MP, Minister for Health 08 8463 6270 healthministerforhealth@sa.gov.au GPO Box 2555, Adelaide SA 5001</p>

<p>Tasmania</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is possible to get a PrEP prescription through the Sexual Health Service Tasmania, with individuals then importing the drug themselves (see next section regarding self-importation). • The Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services has shown some interest but has not yet announced any funded PrEP access arrangements. 	<p>The Hon. Michael Ferguson MP, Minister for Health 03 6165 7701 michael.ferguson@parliament.tas.gov.au Level 4, 111 Macquarie Street, Hobart TAS 7000</p>
<p>Victoria</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PrEPX began on 26 July, with 2,600 places available in Melbourne and rural Victoria. Approximately 2,000 people are registered for information on the study, and around 1,000 people have been enrolled in the first month. • There is a one-off co-payment for each three month's supply of the drug in line with Medicare co-payments, with concession rates available. • The study should expand to six rural and regional sites before the end of September, pending ethics approval. Rural and regional people can enrol in Melbourne and switch to the new sites once they are ready. • Conversations have started with a number of targeted communities and peak bodies to ensure there is broad awareness about PrEPX, and that access includes key populations in addition to men who have sex with men. • The VicPrEP study will continue until June 2017. All VicPrEP participants have a spot reserved for them in PrEPX and will be transitioned to that study on completing VicPrEP. • Victorian guidance for medical practitioners to prescribe PrEP will be released in August 2016. The guidance document was developed to provide medical practitioners with information on PrEP including off-label prescribing until such time Truvada for PrEP is listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. 	<p>The Hon. Jill Hennessy MP, Minister for Health 03 9096 8561 minister.health@health.vic.gov.au Level 22, 50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne VIC 3000</p>
<p>Western Australia</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The WA Department of Health has issued an Operational Directive that recommends Government employed s100 doctors offer and/or prescribe PrEP to patients that meet the eligibility criteria. • The WA Department of Health has not announced funding for PrEP access arrangements. • The WA AIDS Council provides clinical and peer-navigator support for personal importation. • Following initial PrEP prescription, patients can be referred to the M Clinic for follow-up, including people with no pre-existing relationship with the clinic. • The WA AIDS Council has provided limited funds to assist with the cost of providing PrEP medication. 	<p>The Hon. John H D Day BS, BDS, MLA, Minister for Health, Culture and the Arts 08 6552 6200 Minister.Day@dpc.wa.gov.au 11th Floor, Dumas House, 2 Havelock Street, West Perth WA 6005</p>

3) PrEP – access options and contacts

PrEP access through the PBS is still some way off, however there are alternative options available, as summarised below. For further information see this PrEP options paper: <http://endinghiv.org.au/nsw/stay-safe/prep/>

PrEP access through demonstration studies

Access is currently available in four Australian state/territories: NSW, Victoria, Queensland and the ACT. These PrEP studies are mainly recruiting gay and bisexual men who meet specific criteria. Information about how to participate in a PrEP study is available here: <http://bit.ly/ausprep>

Individual access to PrEP – local pharmacy

It is possible for a GP to prescribe Truvada as PrEP if you believe you are at risk of HIV acquisition. Some people choose this option because they do not live in a state that has a PrEP study, or because they do not meet the criteria for the study in their state. Once you have a prescription for PrEP, there are two different ways that you can obtain the drug:

1. Visit a local pharmacy

The cost is approximately \$10,000 for a year's supply of Truvada as PrEP, which is too expensive for most people.

2. Personal importation

It is also possible to purchase a generic version of PrEP from a reliable overseas supplier through the personal importation scheme. Generics are copies of brand-name drugs. The cost of generic PrEP is less expensive than the patented drug and is approximately \$800 per year.

Financial support

For those who may have financial difficulties paying for the drug, there is a special low income support scheme: <http://www.prepaccessnow.com.au/#!assistance-coupons/yvfb5>

AIDS Councils

For support and further information about PrEP access options in your state or territory, contact your local AIDS Council:

AIDS Action Council of the ACT > 02 6257 2855 > contact@aidsaction.org.au > www.aidsaction.org.au	SAMESH (SA Mobilisation and Empowerment for Sexual Health) > 08 7099 5300 > samesh-enquiries@samesh.org.au > http://www.samesh.org.au
ACON > 02 9206 2000 > acon@acon.org.au > www.acon.org.au	Tasmanian Council on AIDS, Hepatitis & Related Diseases (TasCAHRD) > 03 6234 1242 > mail@tascahrd.org.au > www.tascahrd.org.au
Northern Territory AIDS & Hepatitis Council (NTAHC) > 08 8944 7777 > info@ntahc.org.a > www.ntahc.org.au	Victorian AIDS Council (VAC) > 03 9865 6700 > enquiries@vac.org.au > www.vac.org.au
Queensland AIDS Council (QuAC) > 07 3017 1777 or 1800 177 434 > info@quac.org.au > www.quac.org.au	Western Australian AIDS Council (WAAC) > 08 9482 0000 > waac@waids.com > www.waids.com