

MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AFAO: Sex worker advocate recognised with Queen's Birthday honours

The inclusion of Julie Bates in this year's Queen's Birthday honour list is a recognition of her extraordinary achievements as an advocate and campaigner, and a milestone moment in the acceptance of sex work in Australia. Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO) CEO Darryl O'Donnell today congratulated Ms Bates on being made an officer of Order of Australia (AO) in the 2018 Queen's Birthday Honours List.

"Julie Bates has been a tireless and courageous champion for the rights and safety of sex workers for over four decades," Mr O'Donnell said.

"Her efforts to improve safe working conditions in the sex industry in the 1980s and 1990s were instrumental in preventing HIV transmission."

Mr O'Donnell said Ms Bates was central to the revival of the Australia Prostitutes Collective, which then became the Sex Workers Outreach Project.

She has also been active in a number of organisations involved in harm minimisation for drug users, including the NSW Users and AIDS Association (NUAA).

"More than anyone else, Julie Bates was responsible for making condom use common practice in NSW brothels, through her sheer persistence and persuasiveness."

"She has been a pillar in encouraging others to mobilise and building a movement."

Mr O'Donnell said the recognition of Ms Bates' achievements was also indicative of broader social changes in the Australian community.

"Julie Bates stood up for the rights of sex workers when the stigma attached to the industry was pervasive.

"While there is still a long way to go, the fact that Julie Bates has received the highest honour in Australian civic life is an indication that Australians are now having mature and open conversations about the role of sex workers and sexual health.

“I’m sure that Julie will continue to lead the way in promoting safe sex and peer led approaches for sex workers and drug users.

“But more importantly, her commitment inspires others to break down social taboos around sex work, sexual health, drug use and HIV.”

Mr O’Donnell also paid tribute to other Australians recognised in the Queen’s Honours list who have made important contributions to HIV policy, medicine, research and advocacy.

Scientia Professor David Cooper, the founder of the Kirby Institute was posthumously made a Companion of the Order of Australia (AC).

“David was a towering figure in the HIV response, not just in Australia, but across the globe. His commanding intellect was matched by humanity and humility,” Mr O’Donnell said.

Professor Kit Fairley, the Director of the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre, was made an Officer of the Order of Australia for his distinguished service to community health, particularly in the area of infectious and sexually transmitted diseases, as a clinician, researcher and administrator, and to medical education.

Dr Teresa Anderson, Chief Executive of the Sydney Local Health District, was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for service to community health, and to public administration in New South Wales, as a clinician, manager and health service executive.

Dr Joanne Mitchell, Director of Population Health with the NSW Ministry of Health, was awarded a Public Service Medal (PSM) for outstanding public service to population health policy in New South Wales.

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