

MEDIA RELEASE

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Ending HIV transmission demands resolve

The Federal Government's decision to extend funding for organisations at the heart of the nation's HIV prevention effort will bolster Australia's impressive progress in reducing new transmissions and combating stigma.

The Minister for Health, the Hon. Greg Hunt made the \$3 million commitment at a parliamentary breakfast in Canberra this morning, ahead of World AIDS Day, this Sunday 1 December.

The funding allows organisations such as the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations, Scarlet Alliance, Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League and the National Association for People with HIV Australia to continue advocating and forming evidence-based policy, promote consistent messages about HIV and harm minimisation, and help community organisations make the most of scientific and medical innovations.

This year Australia recorded its lowest HIV transmission rate since 2001, amid record testing for HIV and widespread uptake of the HIV prevention medicine, PrEP.

"HIV diagnoses are rapidly decreasing, thanks to the potent combination of new medicines and profound commitment from the communities on the front line of HIV prevention and treatment," said Darryl O'Donnell, CEO of the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations.

"The increase in testing for HIV suggests we may be at the beginning of a turning point on stigma, with more people confident to get a test and know their status.

"Renewed financial support from the federal Government allows us to continue this important work as we pursue the end of Australian HIV transmission.

"Epidemics are dynamic in nature. If commitment to ending them wavers they can quickly resurge. That's why we must seize on the opportunity of scientific advances and mobilised communities by resourcing them to complete their mission.

"We are making progress but the job is not done. There is a great risk in presuming success before it has actually been achieved. The work ahead requires enduring commitment and resolve.

"AFAO warmly welcomes the federal Government's commitment at today's parliamentary breakfast and looks forward to working co-operatively to end new HIV transmission in the years ahead."

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