



AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION
OF AIDS ORGANISATIONS
Leading the community response to HIV



Media Statement: LGBTI people, health and COVID-19

17 March 2020

The Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations and the National LGBTI Health Alliance today called for health practitioners and medical professionals to ensure the health needs of LGBTI people are considered across all responses to the COVID-19 outbreak.

It is recognised that LGBTI people experience higher rates of chronic health conditions which means that many are at risk of serious illness if they acquire COVID-19. This is exacerbated by the fundamental structural access barriers to high quality and culturally safe healthcare LGBTI people still experience including actual and perceived discrimination and stigma when accessing services including primary health care.

The two organisations have called on governments, health and wellbeing services, clinicians and allied health workers to ensure all responses to the virus consider the needs of LGBTI people to ensure that health messaging, testing services and ongoing care is provided in a person centred and culturally appropriate way.

Many people across LGBTI communities rely on daily medication, for example, people living with HIV, as well as trans and gender diverse people who are accessing gender affirming hormonal care. It is vital that the health system is able to ensure that each person has access to at least two months' supply to see them through a potential lockdown or periods of self-isolation.

“There is a period of uncertainty ahead and making arrangements, so you have a reasonable supply of medicine is sensible,” said Darryl O’Donnell, CEO of The Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations.

Nicky Bath, CEO of the National LGBTI Health Alliance, said community solidarity was crucial in the weeks ahead.

“We have a strong history of looking after each other and we are already seeing our communities organising to offer support to each other via social media and while this will continue, we also need to know that the health system is thinking about us and our diverse needs.

“We ask that those in the health system who aren’t accustomed to working with LGBTI people to be mindful and sensitive, care must be person-centred, culturally appropriate to ensure LGBTI people get the healthcare they need.”

“Through social solidarity and understanding we can ease the impact of COVID-19 on people and the health system.”

Key points:

- If you are taking PrEP and are concerned about maintaining your three-monthly doctor’s appointments, or you are accessing gender affirming hormonal care and concerned about your ongoing maintenance and monitoring – talk to your doctor about options.

- LGBTI people experience higher rates of chronic health conditions – care must be person-centred, culturally appropriate to ensure LGBTI people get the healthcare they need
- QLife provides anonymous and free LGBTI peer support and referral for people in Australia wanting to talk about sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships - **If you are experiencing distress and would like to talk with someone on the phone or over the web, then please call QLife on 1800 184 527 or go to [www.qlife.org.au](http://www qlife.org.au)**

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