



## ***MEDIA RELEASE***

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### **WORLD AIDS DAY: HIV Taskforce charts path to ending HIV transmission by 2030**

As we prepare to mark World AIDS Day, a report from Australia's HIV Taskforce charts a realistic path to ending HIV transmission by the end of the decade.

Health Equity Matters, the federation of Australia's leading HIV LGBTIQA+ health organisations, strongly endorses the report which broadly recommends:

- Making the HIV prevention pill, PrEP, more easily available and boosting its use;
- Expanding HIV testing among hard to reach populations;
- Reducing financial barriers to treatment;
- Driving greater awareness of HIV and fighting stigma by working with peak HIV bodies such as Health Equity Matters and the National Association of People with HIV Australia to develop a communication strategy through to the end of the decade; and
- Working with states and territories to promote reforms to laws that criminalise people with HIV.

The Taskforce was led by the Health Minister, the Hon Mark Butler and the Assistant Health Minister, the Hon Ged Kearney.

Health Equity Matters chief executive, Darryl O'Donnell, said:

"The release of this report signals a rock solid commitment to leading the world to end an epidemic.

"Inner Sydney has already been confirmed as the first community in the world to achieve the virtual elimination of HIV transmission. Australia can be the first nation.

"This report gives us a clear path, emphasising Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), testing, treatment, awareness and decriminalisation. It draws on the powerful and effective partnership between community, clinicians, researchers and government that has served Australia so well since the start of the HIV epidemic.

"With the direction now clear, we look forward to working with the Government through the coming budget process and in the execution of this agenda. There is no easy win here - the effort required is serious, but the prize is to end an epidemic."

The latest Kirby Institute HIV surveillance report showed diagnoses in Australia have halved over the last decade, and remained stable over the past year, with 555 diagnoses in 2022. However it pointed to small



increases among heterosexual people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and in some states and territories.

“When you are trying to defeat an epidemic, the last mile will be the most difficult,” Darryl O’Donnell said. “That is why this Taskforce’s work and the bi-partisan commitment to ending HIV transmission is so important. We cannot lose momentum now.

“I thank the Government and Opposition for backing in this agenda and making this commitment.

“If we keep our wits, we can end HIV transmission for good. This would be a profound achievement that honours the thousands of people whose lives have been lost to HIV.

Health Equity Matters warmly welcomed a new commitment from the Foreign Minister, the Hon Penny Wong to invest \$12 million to support local communities and governments in Southeast Asia and the Pacific to improve HIV testing and treatment, reduce stigma and discrimination, and lower transmission.

UNAIDS and Health Equity Matters will deliver the initiative, which aims to accelerate access to new HIV prevention and treatment solutions, through community-led responses.

“The most effective way to treat and prevent HIV is to empower the people who most feel its impact,” Darryl O’Donnell said. “We endorse the Government’s resolve to fight stigma and expand access to prevention, treatment and testing.”

**Interview requests: Nick Lucchinelli 0422229032**