



MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia charts a path to zero on World AIDS Day

The Federal Government's confirmation of a specialist taskforce to drive the end of HIV transmission in Australia, along with increased funding to UNAIDS, have been strongly welcomed by AFAO, as we mark World AIDS Day 2022.

The Government confirmed the taskforce will be headed by Health Minister, the Hon. Mark Butler and Assistant Health Minister the Hon. Ged Kearney at the World AIDS Day parliamentary breakfast in Canberra. It will include representatives from the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations and the National Association of People with HIV Australia alongside medical experts and will be charged with removing bottlenecks and driving progress to end HIV transmission.

In addition, one-off funding of \$220,000 to AFAO will boost community consultation activities targeting the health issues and barriers LGBTIQ+ Australians may face. LGBTIQ+ Health Australia will also receive one-off funding of \$250,000 to assist with consultation on a national LGBTIQ+ Health plan.

A further \$300,000 will support AFAO to establish a peer-led, contact tracing workforce development pilot as part of the national HIV response and to improve wrap around support at the time and place of HIV diagnosis.

Foreign Minister, Senator Penny Wong, announced a new partnership of \$25 million over five years with UNAIDS. The resourcing will assist the expert technical body to overcome the significant setbacks of COVID-19, and support global efforts to get back on track to end AIDS as a major public health threat by 2030.

The announcements come on World AIDS Day, an annual moment to remember [more than 40 million people who lost their lives to AIDS](#) over the past 41 years, while recommitting to prevention and treatment in Australia and beyond.

The most recent Australian annual statistics show there were 552 new HIV diagnoses in 2021, the lowest number since the beginning of the epidemic. The majority of new diagnoses remain in gay and bisexual men (68%), but have reduced by more than 52% over the past 10 years due to a concerted effort to expand use of the HIV prevention medicine, PrEP, over the past five years.



Despite strong momentum in Australia, the global HIV effort has been disrupted by the COVID pandemic. [Figures released by UNAIDS](#) show transmissions are rising in the Asia Pacific for the first time in a decade with only six in ten people living with HIV achieving a suppressed viral load. Unequal access to medicine and healthcare along with enduring stigma are hindering efforts.

AFAO chief executive, Darryl O'Donnell, said we had all the tools needed to end HIV transmission.

"The only barriers to ending HIV transmission are the ones humanity imposes upon itself," Mr O'Donnell said. "Stigma and short sightedness are our greatest enemy, while co-operation, evidence and empathy can power our progress.

"Australia is on the path to an astonishing achievement, virtual elimination of HIV transmission. Today's announcement by Minister Butler reinforces that momentum, which can only accelerate through additional investment and commitment at the May Budget.

"AFAO also commends Minister Wong for Australia's expanded contribution to UNAIDS along with its three year, [\\$266 million investment in the Global Fund](#), the world's main body for financing the HIV treatment and prevention in developing nations. These commitments will help people fighting HIV on the frontlines in Asia and beyond to get the response back on track.

"Epidemics do not have a steady state. They either expand or contract. AFAO and its partners are doubling down on their commitment to end HIV for good."

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