

MEDIA RELEASE

HIV/AIDS: WHAT YOUR GOVERNMENT CAN DO - ACCESS TO TESTING & PREP

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

7 OCTOBER 2014 - Knowing Your HIV status is central to our goal of ending HIV. The introduction of rapid testing in Victoria has seen an increase in HIV and STI testing amongst gay men and other men who have sex with men (MSM). Building on this success, the Victorian AIDS Council (VAC) and Living Positive Victoria are aiming to increase the availability of testing. We are also advocating for the introduction of Pre Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP).

“Protecting people from contracting HIV with one pill per day, PrEP is a vital tool that gay men and other affected communities need access to,” said VAC CEO Simon Ruth.

With the Victorian State Election now less than eight weeks away, VAC and Living Positive Victoria are calling for all political parties to commit to the actions outlined in their joint document HIV/AIDS: What Your Government Can Do including:

- Support increased community based rapid testing for gay men and MSM throughout Victoria using mobile facilities and/or outposted services, with accredited peer testers
- Advocate for the availability of HIV self-testing devices with the TGA and commit to supporting these devices in Victoria by funding a community based co-ordinated health promotion campaign targeting people who choose to use self-testing devices
- Work with community based service providers to address systematic STI screening barriers
- Commit to better strategies targeting women and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities at risk of HIV and promote improvements in HIV testing so that the gender and cultural gap in time-to-diagnosis is reduced
- Recognise PrEP as a highly effective HIV risk reduction strategy being employed by gay men and MSM in Victoria to avoid HIV and encourage its approval with the TGA
- Support the introduction of PrEP in Victoria by addressing financial barriers to access and funding consumer support programs

To view the joint document HIV/AIDS: What Your Government Can Do, go to: www.vac.org.au

ENDS

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