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MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

13 APR 2007

Howard wrong on HIV immigration

Claims by the Prime Minister that tighter restrictions are needed to stop HIV-positive people migrating to Australia are ill-informed, misguided and unhelpful, the National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS (NAPWA) has said.

Australian immigration law already prevents people with HIV, or any serious illness, from gaining permanent resident status – except where there are genuine compassionate or humanitarian grounds. All applicants for permanent residency visas are required to undergo a comprehensive medical assessment, and people found to be HIV-positive are routinely rejected. Only by undergoing a lengthy and expensive legal process, and providing evidence of genuine and compelling compassionate or humanitarian reasons, are positive people able to become permanent residents. NAPWA understands that only a handful of applications are approved each year.

“The Prime Minister’s comments send a confusing message and suggest that Australia has open borders for immigrants with HIV. That’s clearly not the case, and we are shocked that the Prime Minister would try to make a political issue of HIV,” said NAPWA President Robert Mitchell.

“We absolutely reject the suggestion that tighter restrictions on HIV-positive immigrants are needed. What is needed is an evidence-based, bipartisan approach to combat HIV, encourage testing and provide support and treatment for positive people.”

“It’s HIV that we should be targeting, not people with HIV.”

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