
19th International AIDS Conference opens in Washington DC

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On the eve of the world's largest gathering of AIDS researchers, activists and policy makers, NAPWHA is calling on the Australian Government to show greater leadership in international efforts to finally end the global AIDS epidemic.

The international conference in Washington will highlight exciting breakthroughs in HIV prevention and treatment, which are now being implemented in many parts of the world. This is resulting in extraordinary gains in prolonging life, improving health and driving down new HIV infections.

"There is now growing optimism that the world is finally in a position to reverse the HIV epidemic and achieve the goal of an AIDS free generation." said Bill Whittaker, spokesperson for the National Association of People living with HIV/AIDS (NAPWHA Australia).

"The fight against HIV is at a critical point, in Australia and globally, following ground-breaking advances in HIV treatment and prevention."

"To make the most of these exciting advances, Australia needs to greatly lift its game and set bold targets to substantially increase the number of HIV positive people able to access and start HIV treatment. This will help benefit not only the health of people with HIV, but will also maximise the secondary benefit that treatment has in reducing transmission of HIV to sexual partners."

The conference will hear about game-changing developments such as rapid HIV testing technologies, and last week's landmark US approval of a HIV treatment drug for use in also preventing infections in sexually active HIV negative adults. There will also be a big focus on the benefits of HIV treatment in people already infected to reverse rates of new infections.

This conference will be talking about how to best translate important scientific advances into successful implementation and thereby transform the world's response to AIDS.

"The Australian government is currently conducting a midterm review of our national HIV strategy. The danger is that this process may only tinker at the edges. What we must have is nothing less than a renewal of our flagging HIV response. Australia needs a revitalised HIV strategy that reflects the changed landscape in HIV treatment and prevention," Whittaker said.

"In Australia we have so many things going for us and we should be succeeding at every level in our HIV response, not lagging behind. To change this will require incorporation of the new science into our public health responses. Investment in the science and the delivery of that science into Australian programs will reap great benefits for people at both the individual and community levels".

NAPWHA welcomes the fact that Australian Health Minister Tanya Plibersek is attending the Washington Conference. On return, NAPWHA looks forward to seeing the Minister drive a revitalised Australian response to HIV.

NAPWHA calls for action that will restore Australia's leadership in HIV nationally and globally and take full advantage of the new scientific advances that will be highlighted at the Washington conference."

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- [HIV in Australia](#)
- [International AIDS Conference](#)
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Links:

[1] <http://napwa.org.au/people/bill-whittaker>