

VAC funds access to PrEP for 600 Victorians, calls on Federal Government to fund further PrEP access

EMBARGOED UNTIL 7.15PM AEST, 17 JANUARY 2017

17 JANUARY 2017 — The Victorian AIDS Council (VAC) has announced it will give an additional \$100,000 to the PrEPX trial to fund access to pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV (PrEP) for 600 Victorians at risk.

VAC’s announcement comes months after PrEPX reached capacity for men living in metropolitan Melbourne—there is already a substantial waiting list for those wishing to access PrEP as part of the trial, which is the fastest growing PrEP access scheme in the world.

In light of VAC’s announcement and the fact that the PrEP has already been knocked back once for listing on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), VAC is also calling on the Federal Government to use discretionary funding under the Communicable Disease Prevention and Service Improvement Fund to support broader access to PrEP across Australia.

“It is an embarrassment that we don’t have access to PrEP via the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme in Australia, and it’s time the Federal Government looked at other options. People at risk of HIV across most of the country don’t have subsidised access to PrEP, and even in states that do we’ve seen spaces in the public PrEP trials fill up in no time,” said VAC CEO Simon Ruth.

“The Seventh National HIV strategy is now three years old, and HIV-prevention has changed a lot over that time—the strategy only mentions PrEP in passing. We call on the incoming Federal Health Minister to show a genuine commitment to HIV-prevention and take PrEP seriously.”

VAC President Chad Hughes stressed the importance of PrEP to reducing new HIV transmissions.

“The Federal Government has committed to ending HIV by 2020, and it can’t meet that commitment without PrEP,” said Hughes.

“We again congratulate the Victorian Government for establishing the PrEPX trial and helping thousands of Victorians at risk of HIV access this vital HIV-prevention tool.”

PrEP is a highly effective HIV-prevention method, where HIV-negative people take HIV medication to significantly reduce their risk of contracting HIV.

PrEP is approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration in Australia, but was rejected by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) for listing on the PBS in August last year. It is not likely to be reconsidered for listing until later this year.

ENDS

Spaces are still available on the PrEPX trial for people living in rural and regional Victoria.

If you live in metropolitan Melbourne and wish to join the waiting list to enrol in the PrEPX trial, visit the Alfred Health PrEPX website and follow the link to access the waiting list: <https://www.alfredhealth.org.au/research/research-areas/infectious-diseases-research/prepx-study>

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