

## National access to breakthrough HIV prevention drug to become a reality in Australia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*9 February 2018* - The Victorian AIDS Council (VAC) welcomes today's announcement that the Pharmaceutical Benefit Advisory Committee (PBAC) is recommending pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to be listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) — making this gamechanging tool for HIV prevention accessible across Australia.

Globally, PrEP has proved to be highly effective at preventing the acquisition of HIV. In May 2016, the Therapeutic Goods Administration approved PrEP for use in Australia, but the drug remained expensive to acquire. Meanwhile, demonstration trials launched across Australia to make PrEP available to those communities most at risk of acquiring HIV. These trials have played an important role in making PrEP accessible until it could be listed on the PBS, but with each state independently launching trials, access has been inconsistent nationally.

"There's no doubt that PrEP is a highly effective tool in HIV prevention. The challenge has been making sure it's accessible and affordable," said VAC President Chad Hughes.

"Today's decision allows for a way forward, to fully realise PrEP's potential in helping us see a future with no new transmissions of HIV in Australia."

Victoria has seen a significant community interest in PrEP in recent years and VAC has worked alongside community organisations, researchers, politicians, and consumer groups to work toward making this important HIV prevention tool within reach.

VAC CEO Simon Ruth remarked, "The community demand for PrEP is undeniable. Victoria's PrEP-X trial became one of the fastest enrolled PrEP trials in the world and has seen the trial expand into South Australia and Tasmania. The communities we're working with have made it clear that they want to be able to look after their sexual health. PrEP allows them to do so with confidence."

The Australian Government has previously committed to adding PrEP to the PBS following a positive recommendation from PBAC.

"We commend the Australian Government on their standing commitment to add PrEP to the PBS in a timely manner following the PBAC recommendation. This demonstrates a firm commitment to seeing an end to HIV in Australia," Mr Ruth added.

"Today's announcement is reflective of Australia's history in responding to HIV and AIDS - community led organisations working alongside clinicians, researchers, and government for a way forward. We applaud the efforts of AFAO as well as community advocates like PrEP'd For Change and PrEP Access Now that have furthered the dialogue around PrEP and that have empowered the community to advocate for this breakthrough prevention tool."

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