



Media Release

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Immediate Access to PrEP Urged for Queensland

The Queensland AIDS Council has today urged the Queensland State Government to match or improve on similar PrEP trials in New South Wales and Victoria, if it is to meet targets of zero new HIV transmissions by 2020.

On December 1st 2015, a trial of 3700 people in New South Wales was announced by its state government, and last week a similar trial of 2600 people was announced in Victoria by its state government. These trials will make PrEP available to men who have sex with men, as another means for preventing HIV transmission.

Queensland however, runs the risk of falling behind. There is patchy access to PrEP across the state, with importation happening for some through sexual health clinics. Whilst some men are importing PrEP, until the numbers accessing PrEP reach a critical mass, Queensland AIDS Council is concerned that the many benefits of PrEP will not be realised by this state.

“PrEP works, we know this already. With no movement at a federal level on PrEP, we must find solutions to make PrEP available at a state level now, not several years into the future” said Michael Scott, Executive Director of Queensland AIDS Council.

“I do not want the situation in 2020 where we knew we had mechanisms to prevent HIV transmission in 2016, but did nothing in Queensland because it was too hard. We need widespread access to PrEP now not only to meet 2020 targets, but because it is morally and ethically responsible to provide every means to reduce HIV transmission to Queenslanders now and in the future,” said Scott.

In the 80’s when condoms were the only known way to prevent HIV transmission, the community and governments mobilised to make condoms readily available. Now in 2016, we have another means to prevent HIV transmission. The community is already mobilising to make PrEP available, but unfortunately government is lagging behind.

PrEP is far more than just taking a pill a day to prevent HIV. PrEP is a complex program involving regular testing for HIV, STIs and kidney function, and brings men who have sex with men in contact with their GP to discuss health beyond HIV.

Aside from HIV prevention, many men accessing PrEP have already reported improved mental health. “For the first time in their lives, some men are reporting feeling less anxious about having sex, particularly after times where condoms are not used. By accessing PrEP these men are taking control of not only their sexual health, but also their mental health,” said Scott

Queensland AIDS Council is ready, willing and able to be involved in any expanded Queensland trial. Clinic 30 has made importation possible for hundreds of men, but thousands more would benefit from something similar to the New South Wales or Victorian schemes.

For further information contact Michael Scott, Executive Director, Queensland AIDS Council on 0427 138 373 or mscott@quac.org.au.

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The Queensland AIDS Council was established in 1984 and is a community-based, not-for-profit, registered health promotion charity that works to improve the health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Queenslanders, prevent HIV and build the capacity of the community.