

# media release



## **HIV AND AIDS PRIORITIES: WORKING WITH THE NEXT VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT TO RESPOND TO HIV**

23 OCTOBER 2018 – Thorne Harbour Health, Living Positive Victoria, and Positive Women Victoria have released *HIV and AIDS Priorities* – a document that recommends 27 actions to improve the quality of life of people living with HIV and to build upon Victoria's HIV targets, prevention, testing, and treatment efforts.

*HIV and AIDS Priorities* also covers areas of stigma and discrimination, tobacco use amongst people living with HIV, and HIV-related law reform.

Victoria's major parties will have the opportunity to respond to the call at an event hosted at Thorne Harbour Health's Positive Living Centre tonight.

Victoria's record of action to reduce HIV transmissions and to support people with HIV should be enhanced through growing what works well and adding several new initiatives.

Victoria's three key community-controlled organisations working on HIV, Thorne Harbour Health, Living Positive Victoria, and Positive Women Victoria, have developed *HIV and AIDS Priorities* to help guide the next Victorian Government's policy responses and continue to advance Victoria's enviable record of support and action.

Advances in treatment have made it possible to effectively suppress HIV replication and for people living with HIV to live normal lifespans. A sustained undetectable viral load eliminates the risk of HIV transmission, and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is also being used as an effective prevention measure.

In order to fully capitalise on these advances, better prevent HIV, and improve the lives of people living with HIV, accessible and timely testing and diagnosis is required for all Victorians who may be at risk of HIV alongside access to treatment, care, and support.

Thorne Harbour Health CEO Simon Ruth said, "Victoria's sexual health service infrastructure has failed to keep up with the state's population growth and is impeding our efforts to effectively tackle HIV and high rates of other STIs."

"We need to look for ways to expand our prevention and treatment service systems through GPs and Hospitals across Victoria. PEP should be available at every hospital and cost barriers to treatment should be removed."

Living Positive Victoria CEO Richard Keane said, "Victoria also requires action to end HIV-related stigma and discrimination. Anti-stigma campaigns should be funded, and family and peer support programs should be developed and extended. Unnecessary HIV disclosure should be discouraged through new guidelines."

Positive Women Victoria Executive Officer Kirsty Machon said, "Victorian women require a specific focus, to ensure that health promotion messages and prevention programs are having an impact, that testing rates for women are increased through targeted and appropriate outreach and the education of health care providers, and that all women are diagnosed in a timely manner, accessing the treatment they need, and with referral to support and services."

*HIV and AIDS Priorities: a 2018 Victorian Election Panel* starts at 6:30PM tonight, Tuesday 23 October, at Thorne Harbour Health's Positive Living Centre at 51 Commercial Road, South Yarra and will feature Minister for Health Jill Hennessy MP, Shadow Minister for Health Mary Wooldridge MLC, Greens Health Spokesperson Nina Springle MLC, and Reason Party Leader Fiona Patten MLC as they discuss their HIV policy priorities. The panel will be moderated by longstanding HIV activist and advocate, Bill Paterson.

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