

## **Living Positive Victoria welcomes PBAC's approval of HIV prevention medication**

*For immediate release*

9 February 2018 – Living Positive Victoria welcomes the announcement of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) being approved by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) as another means to end HIV transmissions in Victoria. PrEP is a pill that protects HIV-negative people who are especially vulnerable to getting HIV.

"This outcome is the result of tireless advocacy from partners and community organisations in the HIV sector including PrEPaccessNOW and PrEP'd for Change," said Interim CEO Suzy Malhotra. "It also shows that health officials understand the importance of PrEP being accessible and the vital impact that it will have on the HIV response in Australia."

The accessibility and availability of medical interventions like PrEP and anti-retroviral treatments are crucial to Victoria reaching the targets set by *Fast-Track Cities* and the *Victorian HIV strategy 2017-2020*. Living Positive Victoria continues to support all HIV prevention strategies and works together with all stakeholders to see zero new HIV transmissions in Victoria.

"The HIV response in Victoria requires involving all people not just those living with HIV. PrEP is another tool to empower those to take action, protect themselves and their communities from the virus," said Malhotra.

Alongside medical interventions, there are other barriers that challenge the HIV response including HIV related stigma and discrimination. Although the approval of PrEP is a major victory, Malhotra reminds us there is still more to do.

"The HIV response is multi-faceted. We cannot forget other factors that contribute to people not getting tested and seeking treatment. This includes cultural barriers, patient retention in care and HIV related stigma and discrimination."

"By continuing to tackle and breakdown these barriers and using all medical intervention tools to the fullest including PrEP, HIV elimination becomes more of a reality for Victorians."

*Living Positive Victoria is a community-based organisation representing all people living with HIV in Victoria since 1988. We exist to enable and empower all people living with, and affected by HIV to be part of the response that seeks an end to the HIV epidemic.*

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