



**Jillian Skinner**  
Minister for Health

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Tuesday 1 December 2015

### **NSW LEADING THE WAY IN FIGHT AGAINST HIV**

Health Minister Jillian Skinner has hailed the success of the state's HIV strategies as new figures show a strong increase in testing and treatment and a steady decline in new HIV diagnoses.

Today, on World AIDS Day, Mrs Skinner launched the *NSW HIV Strategy 2016-2020*, which will build on the success of the *NSW HIV Strategy 2012-2015*.

"The three measures of success in the fight against HIV - testing, new diagnoses and treatment - are all heading in the right direction," Mrs Skinner said.

"This is a testament to the success of NSW Government strategies, which have supported people to engage in protected sex, to get tested and to access treatment earlier if they are HIV positive.

"NSW is the only major Australian state achieving declines in newly-diagnosed HIV infections. Internationally, only San Francisco is achieving a higher rate of decline in new infections," Mrs Skinner said.

The *NSW HIV Strategy Quarter 3 2015 Data Report* shows:

- a 15 per cent increase in the number of HIV tests in July-September 2015 compared to the same period in 2014.
- around 11,700 HIV tests undertaken in NSW public sexual health clinics July-September 2015 - a 26 per cent increase on the same period in 2014.
- 2015 has the the lowest number of new diagnoses (247) in NSW in the January-September period since 2010. This is five per cent down on the same time last year and 20 per cent less than the same period in 2012.
- 91% of people with diagnosed HIV who are attending public sexual health services are on treatment.

The NSW Government's ambitious aim to virtually eliminate HIV transmission in NSW by 2020 relies on preventing new infections by making testing easier and more accessible through new measures such as: the establishment of the state's first permanent rapid HIV testing shop front in Taylor Square, Darlinghurst; the creation of pop-up rapid testing sites; the removal of the co-payment on S100 drugs and allowing community pharmacies to dispense antiretroviral drugs.

“Around 11,500 people in NSW live with HIV but around one in seven are unaware they are infected. We must - and will - change this,” Mrs Skinner said.

To make it easier for people to get tested and to better support people newly-diagnosed with HIV, the NSW Government announced today it will:

- implement a pilot program of dried blood spot self-sampling, a simple test which allows people to take their own samples for HIV testing without the need to visit a clinic.
- release a suite of new resources under the NSW HIV Support Program to support GPs who have limited experience in HIV and their patients at the critical time when a new diagnosis of HIV is made.

“There are some very exciting developments in self-testing, such as Atomo Diagnostics, which last week (November 26) received a \$1.8 million Medical Devices Fund grant for an innovative ‘all-in-one’ rapid point of care HIV diagnostic test device that replaces the need for multiple kit components and extensive procedural steps,” Mrs Skinner said.

The NSW Government has today announced a clinical trial to rapidly expand the availability of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to about 3700 people at high risk of infection.

NSW Health will support the trial of PrEP (titled EPIC-NSW), which will be led by Professor David Cooper, the director of the Kirby Institute at the University of New South Wales

Under PrEP, antiretroviral drugs used to treat HIV infection are given to HIV negative people to prevent them acquiring the disease.

“The addition of PrEP to our state’s HIV response brings us a step closer to our goal of achieving the virtual elimination of HIV transmission by 2020. It is a real game changer for NSW,” Mrs Skinner said

“PrEP is recommended by the World Health Organisation and other international and national expert bodies for people who are at high risk of acquiring HIV infection. It has been shown to be very effective in preventing HIV infection.”

To view the *NSW HIV Strategy 2016-2020*, go to [www.health.nsw.gov.au/endinghiv/Pages/tools-and-data.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/endinghiv/Pages/tools-and-data.aspx)

For information on HIV testing, go to <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/endinghiv> or call the NSW Sexual Health Infolink on 1800 451 624.

To learn more about World AIDS Day, visit: [www.worldaidsday.org.au](http://www.worldaidsday.org.au)

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