

MEDIA RELEASE

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New initiative to tackle Pacific HIV crisis

An \$8 million, 30 month effort announced today will support Fiji and its neighbours to treat and prevent HIV, backed by Australian investment and experience.

New infections in Fiji have increased tenfold since 2014, with diagnoses tripling between 2023 and 2024. In response, the Fiji Government declared a national HIV outbreak in January 2025.

The Australian Support for Pacific HIV Action (ASPHA) is a coalition funded by the Commonwealth Government. It aims to build the capacity of local Pacific organisations as they respond to surging HIV cases. These organisations include the Pacific Sexual and Gender Diversity Network, the Pacific Conference of Churches and the Fiji Women's Rights Movement. The Burnet Institute is also part of the Consortium and will partner with a range of other organisations in implementing the program.

Health Equity Matters will focus on bolstering the local community-led HIV effort through health promotion, peer-led testing, treatment and care. Health Equity Matters will partner with networks and organisations including LGBTIQA+ communities, women's rights organisations and local church groups.

ASHM, Australia's peak body for the HIV, blood-borne virus and sexual health clinical workforce will provide support to boost medical and scientific work, while the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will work to improve the supply and reliability of medicines, testing and treatment equipment.

Health Equity Matters' CEO, Dash Heath-Paynter, says ASPHA will put Pacific communities and community-led organisations at the centre of the response.

"Containing the Pacific HIV epidemic demands strong and sustainable community organisations working alongside governments and health services. The program will fund and support Pacific organisations to expand peer-led prevention, testing, treatment and care, enabling local organisations to lead activities that are tailored to community need, and proven to be effective."

The community work will support communities most affected by HIV, while also strengthening responses for women, young people, people in correctional settings and other communities experiencing barriers to health.

The investment is part of the \$48 million package announced by the Foreign Minister, Senator the Hon Penny Wong, at last year's World AIDS Day Parliamentary Breakfast and reinforces the Albanese Government's commitment to protecting Australia's health security and the health of the family of Pacific Island Countries Australia belongs to.

Initial implementation will focus on Fiji, while strengthening regional collaboration, peer learning and knowledge exchange across the Pacific.

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