New Access to HIV Tests and Treatments

Testing and treatment for HIV will be easier and more accessible under changes being made by the Australian Government.

A restriction preventing the manufacture and sale of HIV home self-tests has been removed and dispensing arrangements for HIV therapies are to be changed.

Mr Dutton said the changes would enable Australians to test themselves for HIV in their own homes.

“Companies can now apply to the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) for approval to supply their test kits and if they meet Australia’s rigorous standards and are approved will be able to be sold direct to consumers,” Mr Dutton said.

“We know that there are Australians living with undiagnosed HIV.

“Home self-testing provides an additional testing option that complements current options and allows people living with HIV to learn their HIV status and seek appropriate treatment and support.

“It also overcomes some of the common concerns people have about receiving the test in a medical setting and gives them more choice.”

“The early diagnosis of HIV is critical to supporting Australians living with the condition to get the treatment they need sooner and to stop its spread.”

Mr Dutton also announced that from 1 July 2015 amendments will be made to the prescribing and dispensing arrangements for Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme subsidised HIV antiretroviral therapies.

“The Australian Government has committed $16.2 million over four years to improve patient access to HIV antiretroviral therapies in the community,” Mr Dutton said.

“Previously, patients were restricted in where they could access these medicines. The changes mean that these medicines can now be dispensed through a pharmacy of the patient’s choice, including community pharmacies, regardless of where they were prescribed.

“This better reflects the desire of many Australians to receive care in the community rather than a hospital,” Mr Dutton said.
Important new hepatitis C treatments are also becoming available in Australia.

Mr Dutton said the TGA recently approved a new hepatitis C medicine containing sofosbuvir for use in Australia. It is currently being considered by the PBAC.

“This is the first of a new group of antiviral medications on the way for chronic hepatitis C which are expected to offer significant probability of cure and the real possibility of reduction in prevalence of this disease,” Mr Dutton said.

For more information, please contact the Minister’s Office on 02 6277 7220