

HIV TASKFORCE ROUNDTABLE

23 October 2024 Meeting Communiqué

Former members of the HIV Taskforce met on 23 October 2024 in Sydney on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation.

30 November 2024 marks one year since the release of the HIV Taskforce Report. The HIV Roundtable was an opportunity to reflect on progress towards implementing the 25 recommendations outlined in the report, the challenges in this work, as well as the broader context of implementation and achieving the goal of virtual elimination of HIV transmission in Australia by 2030.

Scientia Professor Andrew Grulich from the Kirby Institute provided an overview of current HIV epidemiology and talked about the long-term trend of declining diagnoses in Australia despite an increase in notifications in 2023.

The meeting noted key achievements and progress against the recommendations, including the permanent listing of Medicare Benefit Schedule (MBS) telehealth services from 1 July 2024, initially introduced on a temporary basis in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strong progress has been made on the implementation of key recommendations across Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis, Testing, Treatment and the other areas of the HIV Taskforce Report. This includes the delivery of initiatives announced as part of the Australian Government commitment of \$43.9 million over 3 years from 2024–2025.

Since the release of the report, the Australian Government has also committed to the principles of “U=U” – that undetectable equals untransmissible. The multinational call to action – led by the Prevention Access Campaign – recognises that people with HIV with undetectable viral loads, thanks to treatment, cannot transmit HIV through sexual contact. The principles of U=U validate and justify the ongoing need for governments to provide treatment, while also being a powerful message against stigma and discrimination.

Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Mark Butler MP, thanked the important and ongoing leadership of HIV sector organisations and research partners. In particular, he acknowledged Health Equity Matters, the National Association of People with HIV Australia, and ASHM Health for their work in driving many aspects of the report’s implementation.

The meeting also heard about the significant amount of work underway to progress drafting the 9th National HIV Strategy 2024-2030, which incorporates the policy direction and recommendations provided by the HIV Taskforce Report.

With World AIDS Day approaching on 1 December, Minister Butler stated he was pleased to have the opportunity to bring together the members of the HIV Taskforce again, and to take stock of the last year, the latest in epidemiological data and the next steps in Australia’s HIV response.

Next steps

The participants agreed to reconvene again in 12 months’ time for the next update and to continue this important work.

Chair

The Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Mark Butler MP

23 October 2024

Canberra