

## ~~PRACTICE BASED TEMPLATE~~

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## **Improving access to HIV treatment for people not eligible for Medicare in Victoria**

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### **Background/Purpose:**

Increasing access to HIV treatment, focusing on priority populations, is a key priority action in the *Victorian HIV plan 2022-30*. Modelling from the Kirby Institute in 2017 suggested that provision of antiretroviral therapy (ART) to people living with HIV who are ineligible for Medicare would reduce HIV transmission at little additional cost to the government. In April 2023, the Australian government introduced an initiative to provide equitable access to ART for people not eligible for Medicare. The Victorian state-based program began on 1 July 2023.

### **Approach:**

Previously, migrants to Australia who are not Medicare-eligible experienced gaps in their HIV treatment and care cascade, with many relying on other sources of ART supply, including pharmaceutical industry compassionate access arrangements and personal importations. The compassionate schemes ended on 30 June 2023.

On 16 June 2023, the Australian Government estimated that 393 people in Victoria were accessing compassionate schemes. Modelling indicated that the new program could increase this number to approximately 532 people, with further annual growth expected.

### **Outcomes/Impact:**

A total of 700 people accessed the program in 2023-24 and 808 in 2024-25, with similar numbers tracking in 2025-26. Approximately 80% accessing the program did so through the Alfred Hospital and the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre (MSHC). People attending general practice (GP) faced additional medical review charges, and HIV monitoring pathology costs for those attending GP and hospital clinics are not covered. These costs were covered at the MSHC which became the preferred place for treatment and care.

### **Innovation and Significance:**

Equitable access to HIV treatment for all people living with HIV is needed to keep people well and prevent onward transmission, ensuring Victoria is on track to meet state, national and global elimination targets. Further work to address the inequitable HIV co-payment in Victoria is needed to ensure there are no barriers to HIV treatment for all people with HIV.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement**

The HIV treatment program for people not eligible for Medicare was jointly funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing and the Victorian Department of Health