

# **GIVING IT AWAY: EVALUATION OF *PrEPaccessNOW*'s FREE PrEP COUPON SCHEME**

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## **Background:**

In Australia, inequitable access to affordable PrEP for Medicare-ineligible people may be contributing to diverging trends in new HIV diagnoses between Australian-born and overseas-born gay and bisexual men (GBM).

## **Approach:**

*PrEPaccessNOW* (PAN) is a volunteer-based community organisation and charity providing sexual health promotion and PrEP resources to the LGBTQIA+ community. Since 2017, PAN has partnered with Green Cross Pharmacy (GCP) in Eswatini to run a free PrEP coupon scheme for Australian residents who are ineligible for Medicare, students, or experiencing financial stress. Individuals applying for coupons complete an online form and must upload a recent PrEP prescription. Applicants approved by PAN are issued unique codes to order and self-import 90 pills of free PrEP, donated by GCP. Individuals may apply for new coupons >2 months after their last coupon (no restrictions on total coupons per person).

## **Outcomes/Impact:**

From April 2017-February 2024, PAN issued 2,346 free PrEP coupons to 958 individuals (mean per person=2.4; range=1-21). Annual number of coupons peaked at 462 in 2023. Among all applicants, mean age was 30.6 years (range=16-73), 90.6% were born overseas (49.1% in Asia and 25.9% in South America), 67% had a primary language other than English, and most resided in NSW (33%) or Victoria (35%). Reasons for applying were 54.8% Medicare ineligible; 49.5% student; and 33.6% financial stress. Among 353 (36.8%) individuals issued multiple coupons, median time between coupon approvals was 102 days. In 2023-2024, median time from PrEP prescription date to coupon application was 3 days.

## **Innovation and significance:**

Operating on a purely volunteer basis, PAN partnered with an international pharmacy to implement the first free PrEP coupon scheme in Australia, providing free PrEP to over 900 people. Most applicants were born in regions associated with new HIV diagnoses among overseas-born GBM in Australia, and many accessed multiple coupons. PAN's model has informed similar schemes across Australia/New Zealand.

## **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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