

Media Release

The Hon Jill Hennessy MP
Minister for Health
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HIV RATES REACH HISTORIC LOWS AS STI TESTING WEEK BEGINS

The Andrews Labor Government is taking action to meet an ambitious target to eliminate new HIV transmissions by 2020, as new data shows rates are on the decline.

Minister for Health Jill Hennessy today marked STI Testing Week by releasing the latest HIV data and launching a new HIV awareness campaign encouraging all Victorians to get tested for sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

According to new data, there were 57 cases of HIV between April and June this year in Victoria, compared with 92 for the same period 12 months prior. This brings the year-to-date total to 130 new HIV cases, compared with 167 for the same period in 2017 – a 22 per cent drop.

The downward trend is thanks to more people getting tested than ever before, treatment as prevention, conventional safe sex practices and the game-changing HIV prevention drug, Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP).

The Labor Government fought hard to force the Federal Government to list it on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, launching a study that helped more than 4,000 Victorians access the drug.

PrEP is shown to reduce the risk of HIV transmission by more than 99 per cent.

While the latest data shows great strides have been made to eliminate the scourge of HIV, there's more work to do to get on top of rising rates of STIs.

The theme of this year's STI Testing Week is *Talk, Test, Treat* – it's a timely reminder for anyone who is sexually active to take necessary caution to help stop the spread of STIs.

An awareness campaign will target the LGBTIQ community, young Victorians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians and the medical community.

Tests are quick, easy and confidential. For more information visit betterhealth.vic.gov.au/STI.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jill Hennessy

"We're making headway as we strive towards a future without new HIV transmissions, but there's more to do."

"Everyone can take steps towards staying safe in the bedroom – and everyone should talk openly with their partners, without shame or stigma."

"Around one in six people will get an STI, so if you're having sex, you're at risk. Talk about it, and make sure you get an STI test at least once a year to help prevent the spread of STIs."