

Media Release

The Hon Jenny Mikakos MLC
Minister for Health
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**DELIVERING
FOR ALL VICTORIANS**

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REMOVING THE STIGMA OF HIV

The Andrews Labor Government has fixed an outdated law and opened the door for more medical professionals to test for HIV in Victoria.

Today, legislation passed the Victorian Parliament to amend the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, which singled out HIV testing for special requirements.

The significant change is a major step towards driving down stigma and discrimination that stops people at risk of HIV from getting the vital tests and treatments they need.

People who believe they are at risk of having contracted HIV already have enough to worry about without the added burden of having to find the right place to go to get their test.

Before this change, testing was unnecessarily complex, burdensome and time-consuming. It was particularly difficult for regional and rural Victorians, who often had to travel long distances to get tested.

Currently, Victorians can access blood tests for a range of blood borne viruses just by visiting their local health clinic, GP or pathology service. These changes will mean HIV testing is treated just the same.

The legislation also removes requirements that meant medical professionals had to ensure a person was given prescribed information before carrying out or authorising a test for HIV and before advising them of the results.

These antiquated, special requirements contributed to a stigmatised view of the virus – the Labor Government has fixed that.

The *Victorian Budget 2019/20* delivers \$2.8 million over four years for Thorne Harbour Health to continue their community-based peer-led rapid HIV testing service PRONTO!

The Labor Government is taking action to meet an ambitious target to eliminate new HIV transmissions by 2020.

According to the latest data, 67 cases of HIV were notified between the start of the year and the end of March, compared with 72 cases for the same period in 2018 – an 11 per cent reduction.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos

“We’re striving for a future without new HIV transmissions, but there’s still more work to do.”

“This is a small change, but it will make a world of difference when it comes to reducing the stigma attached to HIV and improving access to testing.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Equality Martin Foley

“These are outdated regulations and they needed to change. We took action so that people who need an HIV test can do so without fear – just like tests for a range of other viruses or conditions.”