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INTERNATIONAL GRANT AWARDED TO PROJECTS WORKING TO GET TO ZERO NEW HIV INFECTIONS IN AUSTRALIA

- Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO), in partnership with the Anwernekenhe National HIV Alliance (ANA), has been awarded the **Gilead *Getting to Zero* Grant** for a project to increase knowledge of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Monash University has been awarded the Grant for a project looking to improve access to HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for newly arrived overseas born men who have sex with men (MSM).
- The **Gilead *Getting to Zero* Grant** Program has funded over AU\$3.75 million in HIV related research projects around the world, with 18 Grants awarded across 13 countries.

Melbourne, 25 May 2021 – Gilead Sciences Australia New Zealand today announced the Australian recipients of the **Gilead *Getting to Zero* Grant Program 2021**, a global initiative supporting projects aimed at getting to zero new HIV infections.

The first Australian Grant recipient is a new project by the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO) in partnership with the Anwernekenhe National HIV Alliance (ANA) to develop, a **new program of HIV health promotion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities** and workforce capacity building materials for health workers engaged with Indigenous people.

Rates of HIV and STIs among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remain disproportionately high when compared with non-Indigenous people, with the **rate of HIV diagnoses in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people now over two times the diagnosis rate** in Australian born non-Indigenous people.¹

The AFAO and ANA program will provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and health workers with resources, knowledge, strategies and skills to help respond to these disproportionate rates of HIV and STIs experienced among this population.

“While Australia’s HIV treatment and prevention effort is world-leading, we have not made enough progress among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The most powerful HIV responses are grounded in the values and practices of the communities they serve. These resources will strengthen the HIV response for Australia’s First Peoples,” said Darryl O’Donnell, CEO at AFAO.

“Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will benefit greatly from HIV programs crafted specifically for them and by them. This is an important initiative that we warmly welcome,” said Colin Ross, Chair of Anwernekenhe National HIV Alliance (ANA).

“We are committed to working in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health sector and AFAO to fulfil this innovative work. This funding from Gilead will assist in strengthening our work and resolve in ‘Getting to Zero’ across our community for HIV and STIs,” concluded Mr Ross.

The second Australian recipient to receive the Gilead ‘Getting to Zero’ Grant funding is Monash University for a project looking to **improve access to HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for newly arrived overseas born men who have sex with men.**

Newly arrived overseas-born gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (GBM) require an increased focus on HIV prevention, and strategies to encourage HIV testing and earlier diagnosis of HIV². Late HIV diagnoses in overseas born GBM have increased substantially (32%) over the past 5 years in contrast with a 47% decline in the Australian-born cohort².

Associate Professor Doctor Jason Ong, a sexual health physician at Melbourne Sexual Health Centre, part of Monash University’s Central Clinical School and project lead said the funding from the *Getting to Zero* Grant will help enable overseas born GBM to access pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), a highly effective biomedical prevention strategy.

“Success in HIV prevention is highly dependent on cooperation and insights from a range of stakeholders. We recognise while overseas-born MSM is a specific population, there are many different countries, associated cultures, behaviours and levels of education and awareness for HIV prevention and treatment within this community.

“Our project aims to utilise lessons from behavioural economics to quickly and efficiently engage many stakeholders to solve complex challenges and create intervention strategies to empower overseas born Gay & Bisexual Men (GBM) with a focus on Asian born GBM to access PrEP,” he said.

Jaime McCoy, General Manager, Gilead Sciences Australia New Zealand commented: “Gilead remains deeply connected with, and committed to, the HIV community in Australia, and we are pleased to provide these highly sought-after global grants to AFAO and ANA, and Monash University.”

“Australia is one of the countries leading the way in striving for the UNAIDS 2030 targets, but there are still several populations, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and migrant populations, where continued focus and investment is critical if we are to achieve zero new transmissions in Australia” concluded Ms McCoy.

About the Gilead ‘Getting to Zero’ Grant

The Gilead Sciences ‘Getting to Zero’ Grant is a global initiative that has provided over AU\$3.75 million in funding to HIV related research projects from around the world. This year 18 Grants have been awarded to projects in 13 countries around the world that:

- Help individuals learn their HIV status and get the care they need; and /or
- Aim to solve the challenges of tomorrow such as understanding the impact HIV has on specific populations
- Show innovative thinking in HIV treatment and education
- Identify and create a new generation of advocates with the objective of ‘Getting to zero’

- ENDS -



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Issued by SenateSHJ on behalf of Gilead Sciences.

Notes to editor: In relation to this media announcement, no compensation was provided to Ben Wilcock or Professor Jason Ong and the opinions expressed are their own.

About Gilead Sciences ANZ

Gilead Sciences, Inc. is a biopharmaceutical company that has pursued and achieved breakthroughs in medicine for more than three decades, with the goal of creating a healthier world for all people. The company is committed to advancing innovative medicines to prevent and treat life-threatening diseases, including HIV, viral hepatitis and cancer. Gilead operates in more than 35 countries worldwide, with headquarters in Foster City, California. Based in Melbourne, Gilead Sciences ANZ employs more than 100 people in Australia.

For more information on Gilead Sciences, please visit the company's website at www.gilead.com, or follow Gilead on Twitter (@GileadSciences)

References:

1. National update on HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections in Australia: 2009-2018. Sydney: Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney published 2020.
2. Trends in HIV and HIV prevention indicators in gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men in NSW, 2015-2019: implications for new interventions and for monitoring and evaluation in a new NSW HIV strategy. Sydney. NSW HIV Prevention Partnership Project, Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney published 2020.

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