



PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**HOWARD GOVERNMENT MAY DAMAGE HIV PREVENTION EFFORTS BY
CONSIDERING DISCREDITED HIV INADMISSIBILITY POLICIES**

Geneva, Switzerland, 1 June 2007

The International AIDS Society (IAS), lead organizer of the upcoming 4th IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention (IAS 2007) in Sydney, strongly opposes Australian Prime Minister John Howard's recent comments regarding restricting entry of people living with HIV (PLHIV) to Australia.

"Today's statements by the Prime Minister indicating that he would move to ban migrants and refugees who are HIV positive from entering the country is a blatant disregard of basic human rights, and only serves to compound current HIV prevention and treatment efforts", said Dr Pedro Cahn, President of the IAS and international chair of IAS 2007.

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“Public health experts throughout the world agree that attempts to reduce HIV transmission by controlling the movements of people living with HIV are both impractical and ineffective; such statements also send an incredibly discriminatory message to a population that has been at the forefront of prevention, care and treatment efforts since this epidemic began. The Joint United Nations Programme on AIDS and the International Organization on Migration concluded in a 2004 review that “HIV/AIDS-related travel restrictions have no public health justification”,” added Dr Cahn.

(Note to journalists: View the UNAIDS/IOM report here:

http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/activities/health/UNAIDS_IOM_statement_travel_restrictions.pdf)

“The IAS strongly opposes any measures that would limit the movement of people living with HIV and AIDS. We believe that Prime Minister Howard’s suggestions of more restrictive policies in this area are damaging Australia’s reputation as a leading scientific voice on HIV prevention, care and treatment and as a leading voice for human rights,” said IAS Executive Director, Craig McClure.

The 4th IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention (22 – 25 July), is expected to draw upwards of 5,000 scientists, clinicians and community health experts to Sydney and include major announcements regarding advances in HIV science. It is organized in partnership with the Australasian Society for HIV Medicine (ASHM).

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“The IAS is currently working with public health experts and other agencies to change a law prohibiting people living with HIV from entering the United States. That law has been completely unsuccessful at limiting HIV transmission,” notes Dr. Cahn. “In fact the US has the highest HIV prevalence in the developed world.”

Current Australian policy does not require disclosure or limit short-term entry of PLHIV to the country. HIV testing is required of immigration applicants, but a positive HIV test does not automatically lead to rejection. Applicants are assessed on the basis of their potential burden to health and social services, along with their potential contribution to the social and economic life of Australia.

The IAS is the world's leading independent association of HIV professionals, with more than 11,000 members from 175 countries. The IAS is a non-profit organization founded in 1988, and acts as an independent voice in the global response to AIDS on behalf of its members. The IAS is the custodian of the International AIDS Conferences, the paramount gathering of all disciplines in HIV/AIDS, held every two years, and organizes the IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention.

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