



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **CUSTODIAL SETTINGS & DECRIMINALISATION OF SEX WORK FEATURE IN NEW NATIONAL BBV & STI STRATEGIES**

The Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL) and Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association have welcomed the release of the five new National Blood Borne Viruses (BBV) and Sexually Transmissible Infections (STI) Strategies in the lead up to World AIDS Day tomorrow.

The National Strategies acknowledge the pivotal role of the national community and health peak organisations in ensuring the success of the new National Strategies. AIVL and Scarlet Alliance are specifically mentioned in all five of the new National Strategies in recognition of the critical role that these peer-based organisations have in ensuring the successful implementation of the National Strategies, particularly through engagement with priority populations.

“AIVL is particularly delighted that custodial settings are named as priority settings in the new National Strategies. It is vitally important that people entering and exiting custodial contexts are not forgotten, particularly as they are returning to their families and communities. Ensuring access to the full suite of preventive, harm reduction measures – and ensuring that people are able to continue their engagement with treatments post-release – are tangible ways that we can protect more Australians from contracting BBVs and STIs. The strategies refer specifically to ‘evidence-based harm reduction and demand reduction programs such as provision of sterile needles and syringes’ in custodial settings within this context,” said Melanie Walker, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of AIVL.

“Scarlet Alliance also applauds the strategies’ explicitly naming the decriminalisation of sex work, which has been proven to be the most effective approach in removing barriers and enhancing access to testing, treatment and services for BBVs and STIs for sex workers. The Australian Government and the State and Territory Governments around Australia should be congratulated for their commitment to evidence-based responses for sex workers demonstrated in the new National Strategies. Our organisations are delighted that governments have listened and responded to the needs of the community to ensure that Australia’s world leading outcomes in addressing BBVs and STIs among people who use drugs and sex workers are maintained and enhanced,” said Jules Kim, CEO of Scarlet Alliance.

AIVL and Scarlet Alliance also welcome the additional \$5 million down payment announced for implementation of the strategies at the national level and look forward to that investment being built on to support the development of the accompanying national implementation plans.

*AIVL is the national organisation representing people who use/have used illicit drugs and is the peak body for the state and territory peer-based drug user organisations.*

*Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association is the national peak sex worker organisation representing their membership of individual sex workers, sex workers organisations, projects and collectives throughout Australia.*

*The five new National BBV and STI Strategies are available at: <http://www.health.gov.au/sexual-health>*

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