

EMBARGOED UNTIL 10:30 GMT, 21 NOVEMBER 2005

OCEANIA

An estimated 74,000 people in Oceania are living with HIV. Although less than 4,000 people are believed to have died of AIDS in 2005, about 8,200 are thought to have become newly infected with HIV. Among young people 15–24 years of age, an estimated 1.2% of women and 0.4% of men were living with HIV in 2005.

- HIV infections have now been reported in every country or territory in Oceania, barring **Niue** and **Tokelau**. Although the epidemics are still in their early stages in most places, preventative efforts need to be stepped-up.
- More than 90% of the 11,200 HIV infections reported across the 21 Pacific Island countries and territories by end-2004 were recorded in **Papua New Guinea** where an AIDS epidemic is now in full-swing. Since 1997, HIV diagnoses have increased by about 30% each year in **Papua New Guinea**; approximately 10,000 HIV cases had been diagnosed by the end of 2004, but the actual number of people living with HIV could be five times as high.
- Available information points to a mainly heterosexual epidemic in **Papua New Guinea** in which paid sex and casual sex networks feature prominently. The very high levels of sexually transmitted infections that are being recorded reflect widespread sexual risk-taking which can be expected to fuel continued growth of the epidemic. Unless HIV prevention programmes are drastically and rapidly improved, the combination of wide-scale migration, extreme poverty and severe inequality between men and women (including high levels of sexual violence against women) will fuel the epidemic.
- **Australia** has the oldest epidemic in the region. Having declined by about 25% from 1995-2000, the annual number of new HIV diagnoses in Australia has begun to edge upward again reaching 820 in 2004. This brought the number of people living with HIV in the country to an estimated 14,800 in 2004. A significant proportion (31%) of those infections had occurred during the previous year, possibly reflecting a resurgence of risky behaviour.
- The bulk of HIV transmission in **Australia** still occurs through sex between men, which accounts for 68% of all HIV infections recorded since the epidemic began. However, the share of total HIV infections attributed to heterosexual intercourse has grown from 7% before 1996 to over 23% of new diagnoses by 2004.
- There is wide-scale access to antiretroviral therapy in **Australia**, with more than half the people living with HIV receiving treatment. As a result, median survival time following the diagnosis of AIDS rose from 17 months prior to 1995 to 45 months in 2001.
- **New Zealand's** epidemic is small by comparison. However, new HIV cases have doubled in recent years—from fewer than 80 in 1999 to 157 in 2004. Sex between men accounted for about half the new diagnoses. Similar to Australia,

more than 90% of people with heterosexually-acquired HIV diagnosed in 2004 had been infected abroad. AIDS deaths have declined consistently since the mid-1990s, primarily due to extensive access to antiretroviral treatment.

- HIV-infection levels are very low in the rest of Oceania, with the total number of reported HIV cases exceeding 150 only in **New Caledonia** (246), **Guam** (173), **French Polynesia** (220) and **Fiji** (171).

For more information, please contact Dominique De Santis, UNAIDS, Geneva, tel. +41 22 791 4509 or mobile +41 79 254 6803, or Annemarie Hou, UNAIDS, Geneva, tel. +41 22 791 4577. For more information about UNAIDS, visit www.unaids.org.