

Media Release

5 March 2020

Femfatales make a call to action for #EachforEqual increased awareness and equitable access to HIV testing

Monday 9 March 2020 is the fifth National Day of Women Living with HIV ([#NDWLHIV](#)) in Australia – founded by the National Network of Women Living with HIV known as [Femfatales](#). Our awareness raising network highlights issues relevant to women, and also celebrates the lives of all women living with HIV.

To help raise awareness of HIV, [Femfatales](#) invites all organisations and agencies concerned about women’s health to hold a morning or afternoon tea, or similar event, in support of women living with and affected by HIV.

In Australia, one in every ten people living with HIV is a woman. This National Day brings into focus approximately 3,000 women living with HIV.

On this day Femfatales makes a call to action for:

- Equitable and timely access to HIV testing for all women, regardless of perceived risk
- Ending the avoidable rates of late HIV diagnosis among women
- Greater public awareness of HIV testing, treatments, and prevention

Katherine Leane, Femfatale’s Chair, explains further:

“There is a general misconception that sexually active women are not at risk for HIV. Consequently, many women believe they don’t need to be tested.”

“Our healthcare providers often share this mistaken belief. Even when a woman presents multiple times to their doctor with unexplained illnesses, fever or weight loss, the question ‘*Could it be HIV?*’ is never asked.”

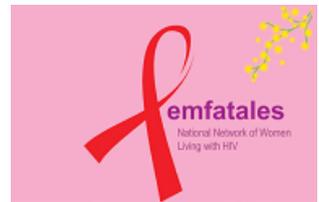
“By the time a woman is diagnosed, she has usually lived with HIV for many years without treatment. This late diagnosis often means she has developed a compromised immune system and sometimes, progressed to an AIDS-defining illness.”

“Assumptions about who is ‘at-risk’ in public health narratives have restricted women’s access to HIV testing on an equal basis to men.”

This **National Day of Women Living with HIV** shares the theme adopted by International Women’s Day 2020 — “I am Generation Equal, Realising Women’s Rights” or [#EachforEqual](#) — which draws from the notion of collective individualism and shared responsibility, where everyone can play a collective role in accelerating gender equality.

In appreciation of this theme, Ms Leane reminds us:

“Collectively, we can make change happen by starting conversations about HIV with our doctors, nurses, dentists and other professionals in health care settings.”



The National Association of People with HIV Australia (NAPWHA) is Australia’s peak non-government organisation representing community-based groups of people with HIV. They provide advocacy, policy, representation, health promotion and outreach at a national level.

NAPWHA Vice President, Sarah Feagan, states:

“As a national women’s network, we know the importance of keeping women on the agenda. This 5th National Day gives us an opportunity to celebrate the strength and diversity of the HIV community of women, and to recognise the unique challenges they face. We hope that all women living with or affected by HIV feel strengthened by our visibility.”

“NAPWHA aligns itself with the MIWA (Meaningful Involvement of Women Living with HIV) principles and knows the value and importance of keeping women firmly on the agenda. On this National Day we hope that all women living with or affected by HIV feel strengthened by our visibility and strive for equality and pleasure in their lives.”

Femfatales declares that it is time for all women who are sexually active, to be offered comprehensive and culturally appropriate sexual health screening, including HIV testing.

Celebrate. Advocate. Inspire. Empower.

Femfatales (the National Network of Women living with HIV) is an advisory group, constituted to provide NAPWHA with an ongoing consultative forum for the discussion of issues for women living with HIV in Australia.

NAPWHA is Australia’s peak non-government organisation representing community-based groups of people with HIV. Its membership of national networks and state-based organisations reflects the diverse make-up of the HIV-positive community and enables NAPWHA to provides advocacy, policy, representation, health promotion and outreach at a national level.

Media Contact

For media enquiries, or to arrange an interview with:

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