



WORLD AIDS DAY 2020

World AIDS Day is marked globally on 1 December.

The theme for World AIDS Day in 2020 is **Now more than ever**. For the bleeding disorders community this is a profoundly meaningful message.

1 December is a day when we are mindful of the members of our community living with HIV and those with HIV who have passed away.

In the mid-1980s the bleeding disorders community in Australia and internationally was devastated when many people with bleeding disorders acquired HIV through their plasma-derived clotting factor treatment products. HFA's recent *Getting Older* report documented the ongoing impact of this epidemic on our community: the trauma and health challenges for those who were diagnosed with HIV and now live with the consequences, and the grief and sadness experienced by those who lost loved ones and friends to HIV. Often forgotten is the emotional impact on the health professionals at the Haemophilia Treatment Centres too, who had cared for their patients with HIV over their lifetime and knew them so well.

The *Getting Older* report recognised the very positive contributions people with bleeding disorders and HIV have made to our community: the inspiring optimism and generosity of individuals with HIV, in spite of all their experiences, speaking out and providing leadership and a way forward into the future.

Some of the people with HIV who participated in the *Getting Older* consultation also highlighted other issues that need addressing, including discrimination by health professionals in the wider health sector, based on an unfounded fear of transmission. This can result in barriers to testing and treatment and access to services.

'There needs to be a concerted education campaign for health professionals to educate them about the low risks of HIV infection when the patient is well suppressed.'

TAKING ACTION

On World AIDS Day we are encouraged to educate ourselves and others about HIV.

In Australia HIV infection is now usually well-managed with treatment. However, the *Getting Older* report reminded us how important it is to acknowledge the experiences of our community members with HIV and the impact these experiences have had on them. We also need to recognise the impact on those who love them and care for them: their partners, family, friends and carers.

Hearing their stories and learning about the impact of HIV on them in the past and now is an important part of acknowledgement in our community. Foundations are also conscious of making sure there is always a supportive environment at community events.

Wearing a red ribbon on World AIDS Day can help to raise awareness and reduce discrimination by demonstrating solidarity with people with HIV.

World AIDS Day challenges us to take action – and by this action to ensure that people living with HIV can participate fully in the life of the community, feeling supported and free from judgement, stigma and discrimination.

For more information about World AIDS Day in Australia, visit www.worldaidsday.org.au. #