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Australia's New Strategy to tackle HIV in Asia and the Pacific

Australia's new strategy to tackle HIV in the Asia Pacific region was launched in Bangkok today by Mr Bob McMullan, Australia's Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance.

"HIV remains a serious threat to the health of our region. Five million people in the Asia-Pacific region live with HIV" said Mr McMullan. In Asia, HIV is the single largest cause of death from disease among people between the ages of 15 to 44 years.

"Australia will provide an additional AU\$640,000 to the International HIV/AIDS Alliance to help build the capacity of civil society organisations working in the regional response to the epidemic."

Countries like Thailand and Cambodia have demonstrated that prevention works. Australia's new Strategy – *Intensifying the response: Halting the spread of HIV* – maintains a strong focus on prevention. "The Strategy sets priorities to guide Australia's assistance to tackle the epidemic in the Asia-Pacific region" Mr McMullan said.

"We will help our regional neighbours to:

- increase and better target HIV prevention activities, particularly in high-risk groups;
- integrate HIV services into primary healthcare facilities;
- improve their capacity to fund and deliver services; and
- review and improve laws and policies to ensure people know their HIV status, receive treatment, and can access condoms and clean needles."

Australia's major HIV commitments in Asia include support for:

- Indonesia's HIV Cooperation Program to combat HIV focusing on capacity building, prevention and care.
- HIV/AIDS Asia Regional Program, which supports the delivery of harm reduction services in the Greater Mekong Sub-region.
- HIV Prevention among Drug Users in South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Countries (SAARC) Countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- Clinton Foundation HIV/AIDS Initiative programs in China, Vietnam, Indonesia.

The launch in Asia of the Strategy by Mr. McMullan follows the global release of the Strategy by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Stephen Smith, on 7 April.

The new strategy is available at www.ausaid.gov.au.