

Big Gay Out 2025: How to show up!

Big Gay Out is the biggest and gayest rainbow festival in Aotearoa, bringing together more than 10,000 gorgeous LGBTQI+ people, takatāpui, whānau and friends. This year, we ask that you stand in support and advocate for the health and wellbeing of our rainbow and takatāpui communities and people living with HIV.

We have set out five key priorities that enable an ongoing community-led HIV response, the implementation of the HIV Action Plan, and address key factors to strengthen the sexual and reproductive health of rainbow and takatāpui communities of Aotearoa. We encourage you to come prepared to speak to these issues at Big Gay Out.

We are on track to virtually eliminate local HIV transmission by 2030. To do this we must:

1. Continue investing in a community-led HIV response

- A strong commitment to a collective community-led HIV response is critical to ensure we build on past successes and sustain the achievements we have made.
- Locally acquired cases have fallen by 56% per capita since the epidemic's peak in 2016, and the Foundation has increased testing per capita by 51% over the same period.
- Every \$1 invested in Burnett Foundation Aotearoa means \$5.05 saved for the New Zealand public in diagnoses avoided¹.
- \$175 million were saved in lifetime costs to New Zealand over 8 years, compared to if acquisition rates had remained at 2016 levels.

2. Maintain current funding and resourcing of the HIV Action Plan

- Our shared vision is to eliminate local HIV transmission by 2030 and support all people living with HIV to have healthy lives free from stigma and discrimination.
- The Government has committed approximately \$31 million to fund the delivery of the HIV Action Plan through to 2028 and extended an additional \$900,000 to Hauora Māori services.
- While Minister Doocey committed that this funding would not be reallocated at the World AIDS Day Parliamentary Breakfast, it is vital that sufficient HIV, STI and rainbow expertise and capacity is retained within the Ministry of Health and Te Whatu Ora to deliver on key actions and continue the momentum towards our shared goal. We have significant concerns that ongoing restructures and cost saving are a risk to the delivery of the HIV Action Plan, and our goal of eliminating local HIV transmission by 2030.

3. Not leave anyone behind, and not disrupt or risk progress thus far

- We are watching with concern as Fiji's HIV epidemic resurges. Fiji has recently declared an official HIV outbreak, with 1,093 new HIV diagnoses reported for the period January to September 2024—triple the number from the same period in 2023.
- This outbreak demonstrates that despite globally having the tools available to end HIV, the HIV response must be well-resourced and sustained in order to reach our goals—we cannot collectively take our eyes off the goal just yet.

¹ The lifetime cost of HIV has been calculated by PWC for Burnett Foundation Aotearoa, December 2024. Every \$1 invested with Burnett Foundation saves \$3.30 in direct health-related treatment costs. This increases to \$5.05 when indirect costs (including life expectancy & quality of life) are taken into account.

- Given our strong relationship and migration ties, increasing rates of HIV in the Pacific have the potential to disrupt the progress made so far to eliminate local HIV transmission by 2030. We need to ensure good awareness of and access to HIV prevention tools among Pacific communities in New Zealand. There remain barriers to accessing HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) among at-risk temporary migrants, who currently must pay significant amounts for the necessary lab testing and consultations to prevent their acquiring HIV.
- However, the Government must also support public health efforts in the Pacific, to ensure good access to prevention, testing and antiretroviral therapy, and the establishment of a needle exchange programme.

We must also stand in support of our rainbow and takatāpui communities by:

4. Not politicising trans healthcare.

- We ask you to protect and promote the human rights of trans, non-binary and intersex people. Human rights are non-negotiable.
- There is a strong international anti-trans movement who are politically motivated to restrict and deny the rights of trans people. As an example, it is deeply concerning that health issues such as access to puberty blockers should be subject to hatred and disinformation within New Zealand. There should be no restrictions on access to puberty blockers for trans young people who need them, and the right to healthcare should not be open for public discussion.

5. Prioritising and resourcing rainbow mental health and peer support.

- Mental health support for rainbow and takatāpui communities has not been prioritised, resulting in low levels of funding and delivery of services. There is also a lack of specific requirements for rainbow competency, leading to service provision that does not meet rainbow needs.
- Rainbow populations experience higher lifetime rates of distress and substance use, population-specific minority stressors, specific barriers to accessing services, and discrimination within services. We must do better to support the health and wellbeing of these communities.

We call on you to champion and support these five priorities to continue the significant progress that has been made towards eliminating HIV transmission in Aotearoa New Zealand and addressing the sexual health and wellbeing needs of our rainbow and takatāpui communities. We will make the most impact by the community and government working in partnership to deliver an evidence-based and coordinated response.

Later this year, in the lead up to the 2026 election, we will be sharing more information about other key issues for our rainbow and takatāpui communities and people living with HIV, and we look forward to working with you on these.

Happy Pride and have a wonderful Big Gay Out!