

## Queensland marks 15% less HIV cases in 2013

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**Singapore:** Ministerial Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS (MAC) in Australia has achieved 15 percent reduction in HIV notifications as it implements new initiatives to end HIV transmission in Queensland. Health Minister Mr Lawrence Springborg introduced the MAC in 2012 to provide independent advice on HIV prevention and awareness strategies.

After notification rates doubled in the past decade, year-to-date figures for 2013 are positive, with a reduction from 137 (2011) and 133 (2012) to 113 so far this year. Chair of the MAC, Dr Darren Russell said the committee had made strong progress in its first year, including the implementation of some Australian-first initiatives.

"The MAC recently launched the END HIV campaign, which for the first time, will address all angles, including education and awareness, stigma, testing, treatment and prevention," Dr Russell said.

He added, "The three-year campaign is designed to change behaviours to help curb rising infection rates and we've been hearing some really positive feedback and stories about how the campaign has been received. It has helped to raise awareness of the issue and educate the community. It even prompted some people to seek support services which, in my opinion, is the most important and positive outcome we can achieve."

Dr Russell also said free rapid HIV tests were also rolled out earlier this year. He further said, "The decision to roll out the tests positioned Queensland as the first state to implement free rapid HIV testing as part of regular clinical practice. It also advanced Queensland's response to HIV prevention by allowing health professionals to test and treat HIV earlier."