

#SaveAIVL

The Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL), the only national organisation representing people who use/have used illicit drugs is at risk of closure after more than two decades at the forefront of peer-based responses to blood borne viruses, harm reduction, human rights advocacy and drug treatment consumer representation.

The work we do is relevant to so many Australians:

- approx. 8 million people or 42% of Australians who have ever used illicit drugs in their lifetime
- Almost quarter of a million Australians living with hepatitis C and
- an estimated 10,000 new infections annually.

A series of fundamental changes to the Australian Government's approach to the funds available under the Communicable Diseases Prevention & Service Improvement Grants (CDPSIG) Fund has left AIVL with no opportunity to continue our globally acknowledged and widely reproduced peer-based BBV education/prevention programs as well as our work in HIV and hepatitis C treatment, support and human rights advocacy after 30 June 2016. This is despite the fact that the CDPSIG Fund is designed to implement the National BBV/STI Strategies and people who inject drugs are a priority population in 4 of 5 of these National Strategies.

The Department of Health have released an "Invitation to Apply (ITA) for Funding" under what is now being called the "Blood Borne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections Prevention and Education Programme" under the CDPSIG Flexible Fund. The ITA covers a 2 year period from 1 July 2016 and effectively excludes AIVL from being eligible to apply for or take a lead in applying for any of the 6 funded activity areas in the ITA.

Although people who inject drugs, improving safer injecting practices and reducing barriers to accessing healthcare, are included in the purpose, aims, objectives and scope of the ITA, **"education materials for priority populations on testing and treatment for hepatitis C, to encourage utilisation of NSP to prevent BBVs and to promote safer injecting" are specifically identified as activities that will not be funded.** The rationale provided is that these activities are "already funded" but AIVL's future funding situation alone challenges this statement.

AIVL has worked for over two decades as a key member of our Governments successful "partnership

fact sheet: Why is AIVL at risk?

approach" to BBVs/STIs among key populations. The CDPSIG and its various BBV/STI funding streams that have preceded it at the national level have been AIVL's primary source of program of activity funding since 1997/98 when the first national funding for Australia's hepatitis C response commenced. **Without the option to apply under this or another funding stream before 30 June 2016, AIVL will be left without any funding to continue its programs or operations.**

AIVL has accumulated a wealth of experience and knowledge over the past decades, working with a vast array of individuals, services and organisations who have contact with our community ranging from across the 'partnership' including researchers and academics, health care professionals, other key affected communities and governments.

Like many other organisations made of community members, much of the work we do receives no funding, an example is that AIVL is also the only national organisation who has consistently worked to represent the needs and issues of people in drug treatment, particularly those in opioid substitution programs and drug and alcohol services, prisons, family services, mental health and other services.

The number of meetings, committees, conferences and forums AIVL is constantly asked to send representatives to indicates the value and importance of a national organisation not just to the health sector but to any sector attempting to understand our community. None of these institutions or agencies, nor the BBV/STI or AOD sectors can afford to lose the voice of people who use drugs from their deliberations. Australia cannot afford to lose the expertise and strategies we have honed across our many years of commitment and experience.

As a friend/supporter of AIVL, we are seeking your urgent support to Australia's only national peer-based drug user organisation and the oldest continuing drug users organisation in the world. Below is a link to the #SaveAIVL Campaign Page.

www.aivl.org.au/SaveAIVL

Your support for the campaign and for the ongoing representation and participation of people who use drugs, as a priority population and key focus of numerous national health strategies and policies is greatly appreciated. Please do all you can to "SAVE AIVL" and to let others know about our situation. Time is critical – please don't let it run out for AIVL.