

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

### HIV-AIDS

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (8.00 p.m.)—I rise to support the motion. There are approximately 12½ thousand Australians living with HIV, 2½ thousand of whom live with AIDS. From 1993 to 1999 the number of cases declined by 32 per cent, but it increased by 31 per cent from 1999 to 2006. Between 1993 and 2006, 12,313 new diagnoses of HIV infection were reported in Australia. The conclusion is that the number of HIV cases has risen across the country in the past seven years—although, incidentally, not in New South Wales. It is thought that the early drop in the number of cases and the new treatments available have perhaps reduced the fear of infection in the community and have caused the resumption of dangerous sexual practices. According to recent research at [www.news-medical.net](http://www.news-medical.net), if current trends continue, infection rates could rise by a staggering 70 per cent in Victoria and 20 per cent in Queensland. This research is based on men who have sex with men, because it is in this population that the increase in HIV has primarily been seen. It seems that almost one in five transmissions amongst gay men are from men who have been recently infected. It also appears that almost one in every three infections are estimated to be transmitted by approximately 13 per cent of men who are themselves undiagnosed and are unaware that they have the disease.

The new spectre is the emergence of the drug resistant strains of HIV. In England right now, 27 per cent of HIV cases do not respond to treatment. Transmission in Australia continues to be predominantly through male homosexual contact, with 25 per cent attributed to injecting drug use and heterosexual transmission, but the pattern is changing. In the UK heterosexual contact has recently overtaken homosexual contact as the most common means of acquiring HIV. I therefore call on the government to do everything they possibly can about this. I note with interest that Meeting the Challenge, Australia's international HIV strategy, finishes in seven days and there is nothing immediately available that I can see that the government are doing to follow it up. I call on the government to do everything they can to follow up on this strategy and to meet the challenge head on.

Outside of Australia the AIDS epidemic is far from under control. The World Health Organisation estimates that more than 58 million people have been infected with HIV and 23 million have already died from the disease. More than two-thirds of these cases are in sub-Saharan Africa, where infection statistics are staggering. In 2000, one in three adults in Botswana between the ages of 15 and 59 were infected with HIV. In South Africa, Zambia and Namibia one in four are infected, and one in five in Zimbabwe and Swaziland. HIV in Africa is primarily a heterosexual disease. This means that AIDS strikes down the most productive generation. The World Bank estimates that the central African republic of Malawi will lose a quarter of its workforce to AIDS in the next 10 years, with one in six adults infected. In Malawi 700,000 children will be orphaned by 2010.

Uganda has been seen as the HIV model for the world. There, more than in any other country, the message seems to be working. There is community education at every level, predominantly the 'ABC' initiative, started by the churches. A is for abstinence, B is for being faithful and C is for being Christ like—that is, having a moral value in your life—although that is now changing, with C standing for condoms. This has been led by the churches. I acknowledge leadership of the Ugandan churches and especially KPC, under the leadership of Gary and Marilyn Skinner, who decided to fight this fight very early on. In 1990, 15 per cent of the population of Uganda was diagnosed with AIDS, including 30 per cent of all

pregnant women in the country. At the end of 2006 the rate was only six per cent. Yet Uganda has a population of 25 million, and 50 per cent are under 15. It has the highest rate of AIDS orphans of any country in the world—upwards of two million.

There is a tsunami every month in Africa. The deadly tide of disease and hunger steals silently and secretly across the continent. It is not dramatic and it rarely makes the television news. Its victims die quietly, out of sight, hidden in their pitiful homes, but they perish in the same numbers. The eyes of the world may be diverted from their routine suffering but their eyes of history are upon us. In years to come, future generations will look back and wonder how our world could have known what was happening—how our world could have known that, by 2010, there would be 50 million AIDS orphans around the world—and failed to act. The government needs to act. It needs to follow on from this successful strategy. We look to the government for guidance and leadership.