

HIV infections hit 20-year high in Victoria

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New HIV infections have reached their highest level for two decades in Victoria, prompting criticism of the state's efforts to combat the [virus](#) [1]A small infective organism which is incapable of reproducing outside a host cell..

The Victorian Department of Human Services recorded 334 HIV notifications in 2006, a 17 percent rise on the previous year, and the highest number in that state since 1987.

While the state government argued that about 70 of the notifications were for people who had previously tested positive interstate or overseas, the announcement of the second big rise in two years drew harsh criticism from Michael Wooldridge, the head of the federal ministerial HIV advisory committee, who described the state's efforts as "an abject failure."

The bad news for Victoria contrasts with an apparently successful campaign in NSW to combat rising HIV infections after a peak in 2003. NSW figures for 2006 have not yet been released, but they are expected to show a small drop from the previous year.

In January, the NSW government announced a three-year plan to combat rising HIV notifications, with a target to reduce new infections by 25 percent by 2009 by bolstering the community-based response to HIV through organisations such as the state AIDS council.

Brett Hayhoe, president of People Living with HIV/AIDS Victoria, said the Victorian government needed a similar co-ordinated approach.

"The money is spread so far and wide that it's very hard for any one agency to really jump on board and do a massive effective campaign for the reduction in HIV," he said.

Links:

[1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/125>