

19-year sentence for deliberately infecting

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Michael Neal, the Melbourne man found guilty of deliberately trying to spread HIV, has been sentenced to 18 years and nine months jail with a non-parole period of 13 years.

Neal, 50, was found guilty of trying to infect eight men with HIV and two counts of rape. He also pleaded guilty to drugs and child pornography charges.

During the six-week trial the court heard that between his positive result in 2000 and 2005, Neal lied about his HIV status in order to have unprotected sex with men he met at venues or on the internet.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) placed restrictions on Neal, including banning him from attending sex on premises venues, but relaxed them after he wrote to the then Chief Health Officer in 2005 telling him that his viral loads were undetectable and he was not able to pass on HIV. Neal later used this excuse in court when pleading not guilty.

His defence lawyer, George Georgiou, said his client's serious offending had taken place as part of a culture where the 'notion of individual responsibility was cast aside by the participants'.

In passing sentence, the County Court Judge noted: 'this is the first prosecution of its type in Victoria and there's no doubt a very clear message has to be sent to the community in relation to this type of offending.'

Judge Parsons said Neal was given repeated warnings by DHS about his behaviour and simply ignored them. He denied his HIV status to victims, misled them, or told them he was negative.

- [Criminalisation of HIV transmission](#)