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PRESS RELEASE



Tuesday, 29 November 2011

Melbourne to Host Largest Medical Event in Australia's History

Minister for Tourism and Major Events Louise Asher today announced that Melbourne has secured the right to host the prestigious International AIDS Conference in 2014, the largest medical conference ever to be held in Australia.

Ms Asher said the International AIDS Conference was one of the most significant and esteemed conferences in the world, and was a major victory for Melbourne.

"This six-day event, which will be held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre in July 2014, will generate \$80 million for the Victorian economy and is expected to attract more than 14,000 of the world's leading scientists, health care providers and political, community and business leaders," Ms Asher said.

"Winning this conference for Melbourne is testament to Australia's deserved reputation as an international leader in HIV/AIDS research and clinical care. Melbourne leads the nation in innovation, research and medical facilities, and it is fitting this major congress will be held here.

"Victoria is home to 139 biotech companies, as well as some of the world's leading medical research centres, including the Burnet Institute, Monash University and the Alfred Hospital.

"The Burnet Institute has particular expertise in infectious diseases, especially in HIV and hepatitis viruses. The institute's researchers have developed a low-cost, high-throughput laboratory test for measuring CD4T-cells (the host cells which aid HIV in replication) in the management of HIV/AIDS, which is an outstanding, world-first innovation.

"Holding a conference of this calibre in Melbourne will further assist medical researchers to deliver groundbreaking technologies in the fight against AIDS, with the aim to ultimately find a cure and an effective vaccine.

"The Victorian Coalition Government is extremely pleased to have assisted in securing this event for the state and I congratulate the Melbourne Convention + Visitors Bureau on this victory."

Lord Mayor Robert Doyle said City of Melbourne was proud to partner with the Coalition Government to secure this prestigious event.

"Melbourne is a world leader in medical research. We look forward to welcoming the most brilliant medical thinkers in HIV/AIDS research and showing them our wonderful city," Mr Doyle said.

Chief Executive Officer of the Melbourne Convention + Visitors Bureau (MVCB) Karen Bolinger said the win added to a string of prestigious health-related events recently secured for Victoria.

"The win follows the announcement of other major medical events we have won for Melbourne for 2014 including the 23rd World Cancer Congress and the World Congress of Cardiology," Ms Bolinger said.

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“MCVB worked closely with the Australian Hotels Association to commit 12,000 rooms; the Department of Transport to assist with tailored public transport options; and the Agent General of Victoria to secure the bid for Melbourne.

“This collaborative approach was key to our success and on which the MCVB prides itself. I would like to thank these organisations, as well as the Victorian Coalition Government, the City of Melbourne and AusAID for their fantastic support.”

The International AIDS Conference is organised by the International AIDS Society (IAS) in partnership with selected government, scientific and community partners from Australia and the wider Asia-Pacific region, as well as international community partners and UNAIDS.

IAS President-elect, Nobel Laureate, Director of the Regulation of Retroviral Infections Unit at the Institute Pasteur in Paris and International Conference Chair for the International AIDS Conference Professor Françoise Barré-Sinoussi said the IAS was extremely pleased to partner with the City of Melbourne, the Victorian Coalition Government, the Federal Government of Australia as well as scientific and community leaders from the Asia-Pacific.

“As the region (Asia-Pacific) with the largest geographic area and population, dramatically varying levels of wealth, and a complex mix of structural and behavioural determinants of risk, experts from the region have a unique perspective on the epidemic. Hosting the International AIDS Conference in Melbourne will make it possible for these experts to attend the conference and share their successes and challenges on a global level,” Professor Barré-Sinoussi said.

Professor Sharon Lewin, Director of the Infectious Diseases Unit at the Alfred Hospital, Professor of Medicine at Monash University, and co-head of the Centre for Virology at the Burnet Institute in Melbourne has been named Local Chair of the conference.

“Since the early 1980s, Australia has been a global leader in improving the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS, both here and internationally,” Professor Lewin said.

“The Australian health policy response to HIV has been characterised as emerging from the grassroots rather than top-down, with a high degree of partnership between scientists, government and community.

“The conference will present new research and influence key policy makers to increase commitment and action based on evidence. It will also promote stimulating dialogue and build consensus to chart a course forward to advance the fight against HIV/AIDS while highlighting the outstanding work of our local scientists.”

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