

The Queensland Council for LGBTI Health statement on 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and sexual activity.

The Queensland Council for LGBTI Health, or QC (previously the Queensland AIDS Council) calls for members of our LGBTI Sistergirl and Brotherboy communities to take action to prevent the transmission of 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) by ceasing sexual activity that can transmit the virus.

QC CEO Rebecca Reynolds said, “The COVID-19 virus is having significant impacts for many members of our communities, and the reality is that having to stop sexual contact is another significant step that our communities must take now. While COVID-19 isn’t a sexually transmitted virus, the close contact that comes through physical sexual activity with other people can transmit the virus”.

“Sex and the expression of sexuality is a vital part of the lives of our communities” she went on to say “and sex positivity is in the DNA of our organisation and our work, so this is a big change for us but an affirming message for us to put out. But we know our communities are strong, and just as our communities have grown out of the experiences of the past, many similar to the ones we are seeing now, we know that by coming together and reaching out that we will be stronger, braver and more amazing on the other side”.

QC takes this position knowing that it is a vital message to get out into our communities.

At QC we use the term physical distancing to prevent transmission, rather than social distancing, because we believe it is vital that we maintain social connection through online and other strategies, particularly at this time. Given that, we know that this is a nuanced situation, and just with the HIV response, there are protective strategies and sexual situations where the risk isn’t as straightforward – while casual sex with multiple partners is a significant risk and should be stopped, online sex is a safe strategy for example, and we recognise that some people may choose to continue having sex with partners that they live with.

QC will be releasing more information about steps and actions people can take to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 while maintaining sexual activity of different and safe kinds.

We will also be releasing important information about the use of and decisions about continuing PrEP where people are deciding to stop having sex. At this time it is important to keep ‘business as usual’ and maintain existing medication routines. If you are having trouble maintaining access to your existing supply of PrEP, call Clinic 30 on 07 3017 1777 for advice about access options. You can find more information about PrEP through www.comeprepd.info

The step to stop having sex that presents a risk of transmission is an important but single part of wider changes for our communities. Over the coming weeks and months many members of our communities are going to struggle at different times. People we know may get sick and there may be significant financial implications for some people. We know that life affirming surgeries have stopped and we know that many folk have been forced to make the decision to stay home in places that are homophobic, and where there may be a risk of interpersonal and family violence.

QC is committed to standing with our communities and maintaining our support services as the situation evolves.