



## **13<sup>th</sup> ICAAP to be postponed in challenging funding environment**

### **ASHM STATEMENT — 11 APRIL 2019**

**The Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM) regretfully supports the development that due to a significant lack of funding support, the decision has been made to postpone the planned 13<sup>th</sup> International Congress on AIDS in Asia & The Pacific (ICAAP), scheduled from September 18<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>, co-located with the Australasian HIV & AIDS and Sexual Health Conferences.**

ASHM CEO Alexis Apostolellis has called this outcome a missed opportunity for the international community to bring together multiple stakeholders united by the AIDS Society of Asia and the Pacific (ASAP) at a time when progress remains uneven in many areas of the regional response to HIV & AIDS. He has called for renewed support and awareness of the importance of ICAAP.

“Although this outcome is disappointing for all concerned, the ASAP/ASHM partnership has demonstrated a clear need for the re-starting of ICAAP to meet the challenges of HIV and AIDS in the region,” said Apostolellis.

Since the inaugural ICAAP in 1990, the bi-annual congress has played a critical role in raising public awareness, building political commitment, strengthening advocacy networks and disseminating knowledge and experience on HIV issues among stakeholders in the region.

The ASAP Executive Committee met in October 2018 in Bangkok to discuss viability, feasibility and utility of an ICAAP conference with regional partners. There, a partnership was proposed between ASAP and ASHM for a reconfigured ICAAP, with ASHM providing infrastructure and logistical support to the conference.

Aware of the funding challenges and extremely short lead time, a non-traditional conference model was developed to streamline the forum. A focus on dialogue, problem solving, and skill-building workshops was designed to promote cross-fertilisation of expertise and keep costs low. Unfortunately, and despite initial positive signals of support, the requisite funding was neither met nor volunteered in time.

ASHM Vice-President Dr Nick Medland, said that although this outcome is disappointing for all concerned, the process had made positive developments in conference methodology.

“We have developed an exciting, innovative conference model in which to achieve our shared goals cost effectively and efficiently and remain focused on providing another event in the future and will communicate this in due course,” Dr Medland said.

“ICAAP remains a vital platform to promote our strategic priorities and a call to action on achieving HIV goals in Asia and the Pacific.”

Alexis Apostolellis continued, thanking everyone who has already worked on the event.

“ASHM would like to sincerely thank ASAP, and all supporters and sponsors who were willing to both fund and collaborate with their time, expertise and goodwill to make ICAAP possible, and also the 2019 ICAAP Scientific Committee chairs and members who generously made themselves available,” he said.

“We respectfully request that donors of whatever type including, governments, bi-lateral and multilateral organisations prioritise adequate future investments in a coordinated and complementary manner to avoid this situation reoccurring.”

**ENDS**