



New Zealand AIDS Foundation  
Te Tūāpapa Mate Āraikore o Aotearoa

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Courtney Acts to improve HIV knowledge

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Hot on the heels of her Celebrity Big Brother UK win, drag superstar Courtney Act is taking her quest to educate the world about LGBTQ issues to the next level – joining a New Zealand campaign about advances in HIV treatments.



Video links:

- Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/EndingHIVNZ/videos/10156738755712079/>
- YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8BaUaEoD6A>

Latest scientific evidence has concluded that **people living with HIV who are successfully treated do not pass HIV on to their sexual partners**. This is the basis of Ending HIV's new campaign, which features the popular drag queen, best known for her appearances on Australian Idol, RuPaul's Drag Race and winning the hearts of millions on Celebrity Big Brother UK.

As a passionate advocate for LGBTQ rights, including health equality, Courtney Act was enthusiastic when asked to host a video for the campaign when she was in Auckland as part of her *Under The Covers* tour.



"An ex-boyfriend of mine is living with HIV," says Act. "He has an undetectable viral load so I know first-hand how this can affect people in a serodiscordant couple – which is where one partner is HIV-negative and one is HIV-positive. It was great to know he could have much better health in the long-run and that scientific evidence shows he was unable to pass on HIV on to me, even without condoms. We live in a fear-based world where HIV stigma can prevail, but armed with science and facts I was able to break down the stigma in my own mind and be in a happy and healthy relationship with my partner."

"For people living with HIV, the knowledge that undetectable equals untransmittable is huge news, not only as a means of preventing transmission, but in breaking down the stigma that many people still experience."

As an influential online personality, Act frequently discusses social issues on her own social media platforms – from discussions about gender, sexuality, HIV and STIs through to conversations about veganism.

Ending HIV's educational campaign about Undetectable Viral Load will run until the end of June throughout New Zealand.

### **Undetectable Viral Load: Quick Facts**

- When copies of HIV cannot be detected by standard viral load tests, a person living with HIV is said to have an "undetectable viral load".
- Most people diagnosed with HIV will be able to achieve an undetectable viral load. Chances increase with an early diagnosis, which is why regular testing for HIV is important.
- The main benefit of an undetectable viral load is better quality of life and long-term health outcomes for people living with HIV.
- Research of gay and bisexual men with an undetectable viral load and their HIV-negative partners in the Opposites Attract Study reported no cases of HIV



transmission in over 12,000 reported acts of anal intercourse where neither condoms or [PrEP](#) (the daily HIV prevention pill) were used.

- On top of this, top line results of the PARTNER trial showed zero HIV transmissions in 22,000 occasions of sex between gay male couples where the HIV infected partner had an undetectable viral load.
- The Centre for Disease Control (CDC) supports the notion that 'Undetectable equals Untransmittable' – also known as 'U=U'.
- While having an undetectable viral load means there is no risk of HIV transmission, it will not protect from acquisition or transmission of other STIs like syphilis or gonorrhoea. Because of this, NZAF recommends keeping condoms in the mix with casual partners, as well as having a regular sexual health check-up.
- Learn more about UVL at <https://endinghiv.org.nz/treating/undetectable-viral-load>

### **HIV in New Zealand**

Currently, around 3500 people in New Zealand are estimated to be living with HIV. Gay and bisexual men remain the population group most at risk. While accounting for only approximately 2.5% of New Zealand's population, they are consistently over-represented in HIV diagnoses – accounting for 89% of locally acquired HIV diagnoses in 2016.

In 2016, 244 people were diagnosed with HIV in New Zealand. This is the highest number on record.

Increased knowledge about undetectable viral load is expected to have a drastic impact on the overall health of gay and bisexual men globally, and consequently NZAF hopes to see a drop in the number of New Zealanders diagnosed with HIV in the next year.

NZAF is New Zealand's leading HIV prevention and support community organisation. NZAF provides HIV prevention and education to communities most at risk of HIV and



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support to people living with HIV. NZAF works nationally to deliver HIV prevention campaigns, community engagement, HIV and STI testing and health services, scientific research and advocacy.

**For further comment please contact:**

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