

Coordination Policy Unit of the Chief Health Officer
NSW Ministry of Health
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6 February 2012

New South Wales Public Health (Disposal of Bodies) Regulation 2011 and Regulatory Impact Statement

Positive Life NSW commends the NSW Ministry of Health on the removal of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Hepatitis C infections from the *prescribed infectious diseases*, listed in *Part 3, Handling of Bodies, Public Health (Disposal of Bodies) Regulation 2011*.

Positive Life supports this decision. For people infected with HIV and/or Hepatitis C, the proposed change to the regulations will offer their families options that were previously unavailable.

Changes to the regulations will permit:

- “Infectious Disease – Handle with Care” no longer being marked on body bags. This practice has been a source of unwanted disclosure since the early years of the epidemic. It has also contributed to the embarrassment and emotion distress of loved ones and family members
- body viewing - we understand that this option is increasingly requested by family
- embalming of bodies and burial in vaults. This practice has cultural and religious significance for some people.

Positive Life acknowledges that there is broad agreement that the risk of transmission of HIV and Hepatitis C via occupational exposure during the transportation, preparation and disposal of bodies infected with HIV or Hepatitis C is low (0.3% HIV and 0.5% Hepatitis C).

International research indicates that the effective treatment of HIV with highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) lowers viral load and therefore reduces the risk of transmission.

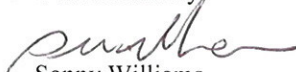
N.B. Research conducted by La Trobe University reported 79.6% of people diagnosed with HIV in Australia are currently prescribed HAART. Of these, 93.9% have undetectable viral loads, making transmission more unlikely.

We therefore conclude that along with universal infection procedures, the risk of transmission of HIV and Hepatitis C from infected bodies to staff working in the industry is negligible.

In conclusion, Positive Life NSW would like to thank the NSW Ministry of Health for the opportunity to comment on the *Draft Public Health (Disposal of Bodies) Regulation 2011*.

If you require further information in relation to this correspondence, please contact:
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Yours sincerely



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