

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

VOLUME 2

H. ETHICAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

HIV and AIDS

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The spread of the disease AIDS (*Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome*) is a matter of public concern. AIDS results from the *Human Immunodeficiency Virus* (HIV). Those infected by the virus are described as HIV-positive. As yet, no cure has been found for this disease.

1. The Lutheran Church of Australia is

- mindful of the suffering of people who have life-threatening HIV/AIDS-related illnesses
- mindful of the fact that many people, including babies and children, have acquired AIDS through transfusion of blood and blood products and through infection prior to birth
- aware of the danger to which people expose themselves if they practise sexual relations with partners who are HIV-positive or if they share needles with such persons
- conscious of its duty not only to warn people against breaking God's commandments, but also to point out the potential consequences of such action, especially when people indulge in intimate physical relationships which are forbidden in God's word, or when they engage in intravenous drug abuse
- attentive to its call to witness to God's grace in Christ to all persons.

2. The Lutheran Church of Australia calls on its members to

- show compassion to those who suffer from HIV/AIDS illnesses, irrespective of how they contracted the disease, and to support those who bear the responsibility of caring for the sufferers, especially their families

- support attempts to find a medical cure for AIDS and protection against the HIV virus
- support suitable education programs which aim to minimise the spread of HIV
- recognise - and promote such recognition in society - that those in authority have a moral responsibility to make every effort to ensure that people are not at risk from HIV infection in the environments where they live, study, work and play
- refrain from persecuting or ostracising those who are HIV-positive and those associated with them
- uphold God's word, applied appropriately as law or gospel, in responding to this issue.