

**STATEMENT**

**16 AUGUST 2012**

## **AFFIRMATION AND SELF-DETERMINATION FOR SWOP**

The ACON board has reaffirmed commitment to the principle of affected community involvement in determining prevention responses to HIV.

In doing so, the board also endorsed a new direction and future for the Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP).

ACON CEO Nicolas Parkhill said community and peer based organisations have been critical to achieving the best practice outcomes that have characterised NSW's HIV response.

"This is particularly the case for sex worker-led initiatives that continue to deliver sustained low rates of HIV and sexually transmissible infections (STIs) among sex workers in NSW," Mr Parkhill said.

"It is now time for SWOP to stand independently as a community-based HIV organisation with its own distinct membership and governance arrangements."

Mr Parkhill went on to say that the ACON board's commitment had been practically demonstrated in the development of a two year transition plan (commencing from 1 July 2012) aimed at achieving independent organisational status for SWOP.

"It's important to note that the board took this decision in the full understanding that neither ACON nor the Ministry of Health can guarantee the final outcome for the funding of SWOP as an independent organisation at the end of this two year process.

"However, we're committed to working with SWOP to ensure the emergence of a strong, independent sex worker peer based organisation delivering world's best practice health outcomes."

SWOP A/Executive Director Kylie Tattersall says SWOP is looking forward to guiding the transition process and working towards organisational independence.

"We acknowledge and appreciate the support we have received from ACON over the last two decades," Ms Tattersall said.

"However, we're confident that the time is right for SWOP to move to independent agency status, a development that will only add value to promoting the health and wellbeing of workers in the NSW sex industry."

Mr Parkhill acknowledged Kylie Tattersall and SWOP staff for the outstanding service they continue to provide, and the combined efforts of the Scarlet Alliance and Kylie's predecessor, Lance Schema, and their contribution to the transition process.

**ENDS**

Further information about the transition process is available on the SWOP website: [www.swop.org.au](http://www.swop.org.au)