

IAS 2007 opening ceremony.

Good evening.

My name is Sharon Lewin. I am president of the Australasian Society of HIV Medicine. On behalf of Australasian Society of HIV Medicine and the International AIDS Society, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Sydney, to Australia and the 4<sup>th</sup> IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention.

As is our practise in Australia at public events and gatherings I would like to acknowledge the traditional aboriginal owners of this country...I therefore would like to welcome the Aboriginal elders here today..... and pay respect to the GADIGAL people of the E-OR-A nation. The GADIGAL people are the traditional aboriginal people of the land we stand and meet on today that we now know as Sydney.

Welcome to the EORA nation, GADIGAL land.

The Australasian Society of HIV Medicine is the peak organisation representing health care professionals working in HIV in Australia and is a key partner in the Australian response to HIV. We are delighted to have had the opportunity to be the local host for this meeting and to have worked so closely and productively with the International AIDS Society over the past 2 years to make this meeting outstanding.

I would now like to introduce Professors Pedro Cahn and David Cooper, the co-chairs for the 4<sup>th</sup> IAS conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention.

Pedro Cahn is the International co-chair of IAS 2007 and President of the International AIDS Society. Pedro has been a key figure in IAS over many years and has played a major role in the evolution of IAS into the highly effective organisation it is today. Pedro is president and co-founder of the Huesped Foundation, one of the major AIDS organizations in Argentina. He is also Chief of the Infectious Diseases Unit at Jaun A Fernandez Hospital and Assistant Professor of Infectious Diseases at Buenos Aires Medical School. He has been a senior leader in clinical trials and research and a tireless advocated for universal access to antiretroviral treatment.

Professor David Cooper is the local co-chair of IAS 2007 and Director of the National Centre for HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research and Professor of Medicine at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. Internationally if people think of just one name in HIV research in Australia – its undoubtedly David Cooper. David has played a major leadership role nationally and internationally in HIV clinical research and care since the very beginning of the epidemic. However, in Australia we also know him as an excellent and caring physician and a passionate advocate for the infected community. He has mentored and continues to inspire a whole generation of outstanding HIV clinicians and researchers in Australia and in the Asia Pacific region.

Maura Elaripe:

I would next like to introduce Ms Maura Elaripe from Papua New Guinea. Ms Elaripe is President of Women Affected by HIV and AIDS in Papua New Guinea and a member of the Steering Committee of the Asia Pacific Network of Positive People. She is a nurse by training and was one of the first women in Papua New Guinea to come out about her HIV status. She has worked with almost every NGO active in the field of HIV in her country, and was recently recognized for her commitment with the Papua New Guinea HIV Awards medal, presented by the Governor General of Papua New Guinea. At tonite's opening session, Ms. Elaripe will speak on the community response to HIV/AIDS.

Closing remarks:

I would like to thank all our speakers for their thoughtful and inspirational words. I hope that the next 3 days brings you, the participants of the meeting, new ideas, new strategies to tackle complex problems, new approaches to treatment of your patients.....new collaborators and new friends. Please enjoy the beautiful city of Sydney. I look forward to seeing you tomorrow, in this hall for our first plenary session at 9am.