



**Michael Moore MLA**

Australian Capital Territory

Minister for Health and Community Care

Independent

Member for Molonglo

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# Screening of Blood Products to be Enhanced

An additional \$790,000 over four years will be provided by the ACT Government to allow for enhanced screening of fresh blood products, the Minister for Health and Community Care, Michael Moore, said today.

The measure, confirmed today, was first announced in the draft ACT Budget for 2000-2001.

In August last year, Australian Health Ministers agreed to implement Nucleic Acid Testing (NAT) of fresh blood products to minimise the risk of exposing recipients to HIV and hepatitis C. The funding allows for the implementation of this measure in the ACT.

*"This measure will further lift the safety of our blood supply, allowing us to meet world best practice and giving patients a higher level of confidence in receiving a blood product,"* Mr Moore said.

NAT is a new technology, which significantly reduces the risk of HIV and hepatitis C transmission through blood donations.

Current screening tests for hepatitis C and HIV depend upon the detection of antibodies in the donor's blood. However, during the window period when viral antibodies have not yet developed, the current screening test is unable to detect the presence of such viruses.

NAT detects the presence of viral nucleic acid, which is present much earlier than the antibody response.

NAT is able to reduce the average window period for HIV from 22 days to around 11 days.

The average window period for hepatitis C is 82 days and it is estimated that, with NAT, this period may be reduced to an average of 22 days or less.

H08\_Nucleic testing

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