



**Media Release - Monday 27 March 2017**

**Canberra's AIDS Garden of Reflection to honour the lost and boost awareness among the living**

Canberrans have been invited to celebrate a massive fundraising achievement by local individuals, groups and organisations with the opening of the AIDS Garden of Reflection by the Chief Minister at the National Arboretum on Sunday 2 April.

The launch of a permanent memorial to those who have died of AIDS, which will provide a private place of peace and reflection within the Arboretum's Gallery of Gardens, follows a huge five-year fundraising drive by the Canberra community.

AIDS Action Council CEO Philippa Moss paid tribute to Richard "Rachel" Allen who had worked tirelessly to lead the community engagement so the National Capital could join Sydney and Melbourne in having a permanent AIDS memorial.

"Richard is a long-term HIV community member and Canberra icon and has led the charge to make this memorial a reality," Ms Moss said.

"Finally, Canberrans will have their own space to remember those lost to AIDS and increase awareness about AIDS prevention.

"There are so many others including ActewAGL, our own Patron John Mackay, the Snow Foundation, the AIDS Trust of Australia, the ACT Government, the John James Foundation, King O'Malley's and of course the National Arboretum who have contributed to a giant community effort.

"We thank them all and it is immensely satisfying that the AIDS Garden of Reflection will come into being five years after Chief Minister Andrew Barr launched a campaign to support the project at the 2012 AIDS Candlelight memorial event."

The AIDS Garden of Reflection will be a permanent, secluded place of tribute and memory within the National Arboretum's Gallery of Gardens as a place of peace and reflection.

This site and other AIDS memorials around Australia have the power to positively influence public awareness, provide a place of sanctuary for those mourning lost loved ones and

reduce the stigma which still remains for those who lose people in their life to HIV in Australia.

“We have great confidence that the AIDS Garden of Reflection will provide a place for not only remembrance and reflection, and also inspiration and community building,” Ms Moss said.

“With the support of the Canberra community, this garden has the power to become a focal point and a call to action.”

**Further information:** AIDS Action Council CEO Philippa Moss 0418 191 967