



**Government House
New Zealand**

AIDS Candlelight Memorial 2014

Nga mihi ki a koutou.

The AIDS Candlelight Memorial brings together people in communities all over the world to remember those who have died from HIV-AIDS, particularly the many who succumbed to the effects of the virus before effective treatment was developed.

We can be thankful for the work of researchers who have made miraculous advances in science and medicine, allowing those living with HIV/AIDS to lead healthy and productive lives. At the same time, we must recognise there is much to be done before there is equity of treatment across the globe.

The theme of this year's Candlelight Memorial – Let's keep the light on HIV – reminds us that there is no place for complacency. The world-wide death toll has continued to rise, and now stands at over 36 million men, women and children.

Keeping the spotlight on HIV/AIDS means continuing to educate people about how HIV is transmitted, advocating for safe sexual practices and encouraging people in high-risk groups to get tested. It means continuing to support research into treatment and assisting those living with HIV-AIDS.

The alternative – taking the spotlight off HIV – is unacceptable. Ignorance and complacency will only result in increased transmission of HIV/AIDs and blighted lives and communities.

In New Zealand, our health agencies are working together effectively and over 80 percent of people living with HIV/AIDS are receiving treatment. However, we have not made the same inroads with regard to discrimination and prejudice in the community. In recognition of this fact, various stakeholder groups are joining together to launch an anti-stigma campaign this year.

As Governor-General and Patron of the New Zealand AIDS Foundation, I hope those attending Candlelight Memorial Ceremonies organised by Body Positive New Zealand will support this worthy campaign.

Kia ora, kia kaha, kia manawanui, huihui tātou katoa.

**Lt Gen The Rt Hon Sir Jerry Mateparae, GNZM QSO
Governor-General of New Zealand**