



Letter from Labour Leader David Cunliffe for Aids Candlelight Memorial Services throughout New Zealand:

Ngā mihi ki a koutou

As we light candles tonight to remember those who have died, we can take comfort in the thought that we join many thousands of people lighting candles in hundreds of communities around the world.

It has been 31 years since the first Aids Candlelight Memorial was held in San Francisco.

The world is a very different place to what it was in 1983. At that time Aids was feared as a new plague that could wipe out humankind. Now we understand HIV-Aids is chronic disease which can be controlled with medication.

However, with more than 35 million people living with HIV-Aids worldwide, the world still faces a mammoth task in arresting the spread of HIV-Aids. About 95 per cent of new infections occur in people living in low and middle-income countries, people who have little access to the medicines that will help keep them alive.

New Zealand had one of the lowest HIV prevalence rates in the world but there are about 2000 people living with the disease.

There is still much work to be done to break down the barriers and prejudices around HIV.

Tonight we pay our respects to those who didn't live to share this moment and thank all those whose commitment to tolerance and dignity is an inspiration to us all.

Kia Ora and Kia Kaha

David Cunliffe

Leader of the Opposition