



My Say

AIDS LIFELINE NEEDED



NEXT month Victorian Health Minister John Thwaites will open the stand-alone Continuing Care Unit at Melbourne's Alfred Hospital that will cater for 15 HIV-positive people. It's a vitally needed

project, one we have publicly supported.

That said, the Australian AIDS Fund has been running a pint-sized, 24-hour unit that cares for up to nine people at a time, at our San Michel facility near the Alfred.

Like the Alfred's unit, we care for all HIV-positive people — homosexual, heterosexual and the transgendered, single and married. To date we've cared for hundreds, ranging in age from two to 70.

But whereas, according to some, the Alfred unit's annual operating cost will exceed \$1.5 million, we get just \$50,000.

In all, we get \$80,000 a year (plus a GST component) to run two facilities, the other being Rosehaven in Melbourne. It is Australia's only unit specifically for women and children with HIV/AIDS.

Something's not adding up.

Allocation of funds is unjustifiably lopsided. Coalface agencies like ours urgently need to be funded on a par with other agencies. Do we need to check out the price of a community-sized cream pie to get our point across?

BRIAN HALL is president of the Australian AIDS Fund.