

15 May 2020

An Important Message from the Director of the National Serology Reference Laboratory, Australia (NRL) regarding changes to the Government subsidisation of some NRL products and services

By now, you will be aware of the Australian Government's decision regarding changes in funding for NRL's provision of Quality Assurance services supporting HIV, HCV and HTLV pathology testing. Historically, the funds have enabled NRL to provide Australian laboratories access to free or heavily discounted quality control (QC) and external quality assessment schemes (EQAS) for serological and nucleic acid testing of these analytes.

What does this change mean for your laboratory?

The services affected by this change are the following QC reagents, EQAS and Reference testing Services:

1. Quality Control reagents

- **QConnect colours** – (Blue, Red, Orange, Green, Purple)-_The subsidised cost of each QC samples is \$287.38 and after July 1st 2020, the full cost will be applied.
- **QConnect HIVNAT Low and HCVNAT Low** – these products were provided free of charge and after July 1st 2020, the full cost will be applied.

2. EQAS

The following programs have been fully or partially subsidised:

- **HIV-1 RNA Viral Load (HIVL435)**
- **HCV RNA Qualitative and Viral Load (HCVQ435)**
- **HIV Serology (HIV4310)**
- **HTLV Serology (HTLV4310)**
- **HCV Serology (HEPC4310)**
- **Hepatitis Serology (HEPM4310) – (HCV component provided free of charge)**

There will be no impact on the 2020 programs but for 2021 EQAS enrolments which open in July 2020, the full cost will be applied.

3. Testing

Reference and confirmatory testing services will no longer be subsidised however will continue to remain available.

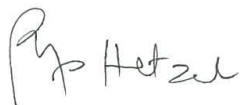
NRL continues to provide our customers with the high quality scientific products needed to assure accurate and reliable testing. We are excited to advise that a range of new product and services will be released during 2020 -2021. Developed in response to customer feedback, they include:

- **Software Interface to EDCNet** – to allow the automated QC result transfer into EDCNet
- **Automated Measurement Uncertainty Reports** – on demand
- **Standing Orders for QConnect QC**
- **Expansion and reconfiguration of EQAS**– into syndromic panels including additional analytes
- **Faster, improved EQAS reporting** – rapid access to EQAS reports with graphical reporting
- **Verification panels** – access to standard sample panels to support laboratory verification of new instruments
- **Australian-based training programs** – new QA training programs for scientists and medical registrars

NRL has supported quality assurance for Australian laboratories testing for infectious diseases since the 1980s. We are committed to this mission and approach the design of all our QA offerings with rigorous science and excellence. I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank you for the support and loyalty you have shown for our programs and our staff over the past years.

Our staff will be in contact in the coming months with more detail of our new products and services. We look forward to strengthening our support for your laboratory and welcome you to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

With thanks and kind regards



Dr Philippa AS Hetzel
NRL Director