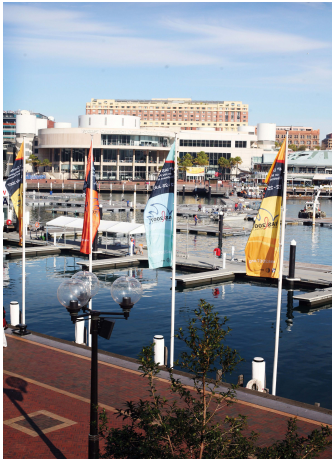


- The conference is held every two years as a means of addressing the very serious global issue of HIV and AIDS.
- The aim of IAS 2007 was to “provide new insights into HIV disease development, prevention and care that can lead to novel research directions, help advance translational research, and move theoretic advances into clinical practice and prevention programmes” (International AIDS Society, 2008).
- Australia’s ongoing leadership in the global response to AIDS and the contribution of its scientific and medical community to HIV research were significant reasons behind its selection as the destination for this event.
- The conference provided the setting for a crucial “Sydney Declaration” on funding for HIV research.
- In 2010, Business Events Sydney commissioned the University of Technology Sydney to conduct a scoping study of the range and impact of contributions made by business events to host communities beyond the tourism dimension. IAS 2007 was one of four events used for this study.



Levinia Crooks, CEO of the Australasian Society for HIV Medicine (ASHM) which is the local conference organisation and co-host organisation, believes that Sydney was a strong draw card in building attendance numbers. “Not only were international scientists and clinicians keen to meet other scientists working in their area, they also wanted to visit a place they hadn’t been to”, she said.

At the conclusion of the conference, BESydney Chief Executive Officer Jon Hutchison said IAS 2007 had helped to showcase Australian science on the world stage. “This event was critically important for our ongoing role in developing HIV/AIDS research and for establishing ongoing collaboration with international interests”. For ASHM, it provided invaluable exposure to their international peers and profiled Australian research on the global stage. It also helped to raise the profile of ASHM to prospective members in the Asia Pacific region.

The ripple effect continued into 2008 with the announcement that the University of New South Wales (UNSW) was awarded the largest Australian grant in its history, receiving AUD\$17.7 million in funding to support research in HIV AIDS. This has led to the UNSW being recognised internationally as a leader in HIV AIDS research, as was demonstrated through a AUD\$18 million grant to the University from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to support a research project into HIV drug therapy. This was the largest grant ever given to an organisation outside the United States by the Foundation.

As part of the conference evaluation conducted at IAS 2009 in South Africa, researchers sought to understand the longer term impacts of the IAS conference on delegates. They conducted interviews with delegates who attended IAS 2007 in Sydney, seeking to understand the longer term impacts which had resulted from their attendance in 2007. The following were identified by delegates as the greatest individual benefits gained from attending IAS 2007:

- The opportunity to network and share information with other experts
- Gaining information on ongoing research, new drugs or new technologies

In the same research, 55 per cent of delegates reported that they had done something differently in their HIV work as a direct result of attending IAS 2007. Such changes are able to be achieved as a result of the networking opportunities and gaining new information at the conference. Changes were achieved across three main areas:

- Clinical practice
- Research
- Knowledge sharing

In an interview conducted with ASHM in early 2010, it is thought that these changes are ongoing. Knowledge sharing and information dissemination are facilitated by the ongoing operation of the IAS 2007 website, which houses the abstracts from the conference. This site represents a living resource which people can still access to grow their knowledge on research, drugs and treatments in the HIV sector.