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JOHN: GET RID OF AIDS STIGMA

SYDNEY: British pop superstar Elton John has lashed out at those who continue to stigmatise AIDS as “fascists and idiots”, and called on governments to keep funding the fight against the disease.

John, here to mark World AIDS Day, said the battle was being won but warned it would be a mistake for governments to let their guard down, with United Nations figures showing some 34 million people living with HIV/AIDS last year.

“We’ve got this disease really by the scruff of the neck,” he said at Circular Quay on Thursday. “But we cannot loosen that grip we have on it. If governments start backing out and stop funding, the

epidemic will start to balloon again.”

John, who is married to his male partner, David Furnish, said the world needed to “fight a new war, to get the funding necessary to kill the disease once and for all”.

But this would not happen unless stigmatism around HIV-AIDS was dealt with.

“If we can de-stigmatise this disease once and for all, we are really going to beat this disease,” he said.

“This is not a faggots’ disease anymore. This is a worldwide disease that affects everybody.

“Let’s get rid of this disgusting stigma and get these people who are such fascists, such idiots, to understand that people have a right to live with dignity.”

The singer is passionate about

fighting AIDS and in 1992, set up the Elton John AIDS Foundation. It has raised more than US\$200 million (RM625 million.)

John is in Australia as pressure increases on the ruling Labor Party to reverse a national ban on same-sex marriages and he encouraged the government to change the law. **AFP**



Elton John