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Elton John in tirade against AIDS stigma

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, in Sydney 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 UN figures showing some 34 million people living with HIV/AIDS in 2010.

“We’ve got this disease really by the scruff of the neck,” he told a crowd at Circular Quay late Thursday, Australian Associated Press reported.

“But we cannot loosen that grip we have on it. If governments start backing out and stop funding, then 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 actually kill the disease once and for all”.

But this would not happen unless stigmatisation 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 f***ts’ 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, which supports HIV prevention programmes and efforts to eliminate stigma

and discrimination.

It has raised more than US\$200 million since its inception.

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.

“People have a right to live with dignity. We’re all treated equal and it is about time Australians got the same sex-marriage together as well,” he said.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard personally opposes same-sex marriage, but her centre-left Labor party is being urged to reverse the ban when it debates policy changes at its party conference this weekend. - AFP



BRITISH singer songwriter Sir Elton John gestures “peace” while addressing the World AIDS Day event in Sydney. PHOTO: AFP