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## 'AIDS beaten in Australia'

**SYDNEY:** Australia's top scientists declared "the end of AIDS" as a public health issue, the broadcaster ABC reported yesterday.

Researchers said the number of Australians being diagnosed with AIDS each year is now so small that the age of the fatal syndrome was over.

Scientists from several AIDS research groups told the ABC the number of AIDS deaths had fallen from a peak in the early 1990s of about 1,000 a year to practically zero.

"These days we don't even monitor it, it's a transitory thing for most people; people have AIDS, then they go on treatment and they don't have AIDS anymore," said Prof Andrew Grulich, head of the HIV epidemiology and prevention programme at Kirby Institute.

The ABC reported that although the fight against HIV is still ongoing, Grulich said the change to the incidence of AIDS had been "nothing short of miraculous".

"It's pretty much dealt with as a public health issue. The only cases we see of AIDS these days are people undiagnosed with HIV, and so they can't be treated," Grulich said.

Peter Doherty Institute director Prof Sharon Lewin said anti-retroviral medications had been game-changers, allowing someone with HIV to live a long and healthy life.

"I've actually seen a dramatic transformation of HIV from a universal death sentence to now a chronic, manageable disease," Lewin said. - dpa