

# talkabout

Where we speak for ourselves

## A noble journey

Prince Manvendra talks about HIV prevention and outreach in India

## Christmas-New Year service hours

## Getting the best from the system

## Summer Yuletide

## New Year's resolutions

# SERO DISCO 3

WHY LET HIV GET  
IN THE WAY OF A  
GOOD RELATIONSHIP?

## SEX and Pleasure

A dinner forum with

# Vanessa Wagner

for guys in or thinking about a pos-neg relationship

Mon 22 February 6.30pm | SLIDE 41 OXFORD STREET SYDNEY

FREE-LIMITED PLACES

PLEASE RSVP BY Fri 19 FEBRUARY 2010

CALL 9361 6011 or EMAIL [kathyt@positivelife.org.au](mailto:kathyt@positivelife.org.au)

PositiveLifeNSW  
the voice of people with HIV since 1988

Supported by South Eastern Sydney Illawarra Health

Photo Jamie Dunbar

# talkabout

**contents**

**03** **Preparing for the holidays**  
Some tips to manage the stress and anxiety of the holiday season

**06** **Christmas-New Year service hours**  
Holiday hours for Sydney HIV services

**07** **What's News?**  
IAS returns to the USA in 2012, WHO treatment recommendations

**08** **Getting the best from the system**  
Have your say on healthcare access and insurance priorities

**09** **Advocating for your health and welfare**  
A roundup of HIV advocacy and policy developments

**11** **Volunteering their story**  
Mike and Gus share their experience of the Community Support Network (CSN) on its 25th anniversary

**14** **A noble journey**  
Prince Manvendra Singh Gohil and Sylvester Merchant talk about the Lakshya Trust and Nokhyu Aikhyu

**17** **A Human Rights Act: What's in it for us?**  
Douglas Barry on the implications of a recent report on human rights in Australia

**20** **Our journey continues**  
Personal stories from the Karumah Positive Live-In Workshop at Pacific Palms

**22** **Should auld acquaintance be forgot**  
Greg Page dons his party hat and party blower to ring out the old and ring in the new!

**25** **Positive recognition**  
The Vietnamese Government officially recognises the Vietnamese Network of People Living with HIV

**27** **The joy of pets**  
Diesel – Michael tells how his best friend helped him through some tough times

**28** **So can you cook? No 38**  
Summer Yuletide – affordable Christmas entertaining

**31** **Cultural delights**  
John Douglas shares his photos of Barcelona

**34** **Olga's personals**

**37** **POJO**

## cover



## Contributors:

Tim Alderman, Douglas Barry, John Douglas, Lance Feeney, James Gilmour, Rob Lake, Michael, Greg Page, POJO, Hédimo Santana, Saysana Sirimanotham

**CURRENT BOARD**

**Acting President** Richard Kennedy

**Treasurer** Paul Ellis

**Secretary** Malcolm Leech

**Directors**

Bernard Kealey, Lance Schema, Russell Westacott, James Wilson

**Staff Representative** Lance Feeney

**Chief Executive Officer** (Ex Officio)  
Rob Lake

**CURRENT STAFF**

**Chief Executive Officer** Rob Lake

**Manager Organisation and Team Development** Harry Richardson

**Health Promotion – Social Marketing and Education** Kathy Trifitt

**Systemic Advocacy** Lance Feeney

**Health Promotion – Peer Support & Positive Speakers' Bureau**

Hédimo Santana

**Communications** Kevin Pyle

**Website** Phillip McGrath

**TALKABOUT**

**Editor** Kevin Pyle

**Design** Slade Smith

**CONTACTS**

Office Suite 5, Level 1, 94 Oxford Street,  
Darlinghurst

PO Box 831, Darlinghurst 1300

Phone (02) 9361 6011

Fax (02) 9360 3504

Freecall 1800 245 677

editor@positivelife.org.au

www.positivelife.org.au

**TALKABOUT**

is published by Positive Life NSW. All views expressed are the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of Positive Life NSW, its management or members. Copyright for all material in *Talkabout* resides with the contributor. *Talkabout* is made possible by subscriptions, advertising revenue, donations and a grant under the State/Commonwealth AIDS Program. *Talkabout* thanks the many volunteers without whom its publication would not be possible.

Printed by Crackerjack Communications  
on 50% recycled paper

ISSN 1034 0866

**DISCLAIMER**

Images of people included in *Talkabout* do not indicate hiv status either positive or negative.

If a person discloses their hiv status in *Talkabout*, either in a submitted article or in an interview for publication, that personal information is in the public arena on publication. Future use of information about such a person's status by readers of *Talkabout* cannot be controlled by Positive Life NSW.



# The silly season

**The holidays are well and truly upon us. The temperature is rising and everyone seems to be gearing up to ... slow down.**

It's amazing what happens at the end of the year. The Christmas–New Year period seems to throw many of us into panic ... or despair. Whether it's worrying about how we'll cope with the social demands, concerns about being alone or wondering how we can possibly afford to make it through the silly season, it's important to recognise that these are genuinely stressful times.

I spoke to clinical psychologist Valerie Rendle about how we can prepare ourselves for the holidays. She shares some useful tips on page 3 and I particularly like her suggestions on how to keep your spirits up when you're alone. I know that I will be spoiling myself as my family are overseas and all of my friends seem to disappear in late December.

For those of you who plan on entertaining, Tim Alderman offers up some low-cost tips and a full Christmas menu on page 28. Greg Page ponders the meaning of the new year's resolution on page 22 and offers some practical advice on how make realistic goals. Personally, I haven't made a new year's resolution for ages, but I might give it a go this year!

There is a lot in this issue on advocacy with news from home and abroad.

I was very lucky to have an interview with Prince Manvendra Singh Gohil and Sylvester Merchant. These are two inspiring men who, together with a band of friends, founded the Lakshya Trust in 2000 and went on to win the 2006 UNAIDS Civil Society Award for their contribution to preventing HIV among homosexual men. Their story is on page 14.

Lance Feeney reports on Positive Life's work on page 8, while he provides

an update of the latest advocacy and policy developments on page 9. On page 17, Douglas Barry talks about the implications of a recent report on human rights in Australia. Rob Lake reports from Hanoi on the Vietnamese Government's recognition of VNP+ on page 25. This is a landmark decision that gives rise to the voice of positive people in that country.

We have a few great stories about bonding and it strikes me that we all get strength and support from very different sources. For some of us, it is our family or friends, near or far, while for others it might be our GP, a volunteer or our trusted pet that helps us through the tough times.

The Community Support Network (CSN) celebrated its 25th anniversary this year. That's 25 years of providing invaluable home-based support, transport assistance and friendship. On page 11, you can read the story of Mike and Gus, who met through the CSN program and found they have much in common. If you can relate to this story, you might want to reach out to CSN.

Michael shares his story about Diesel, his loyal canine companion, who helped him through some rough times on page 27. You can read personal stories about the Karumah Positive Live-In Workshop at Pacific Palms on page 20. This is a great educational and social retreat that can really make a difference in people's lives and help establish a great peer network.

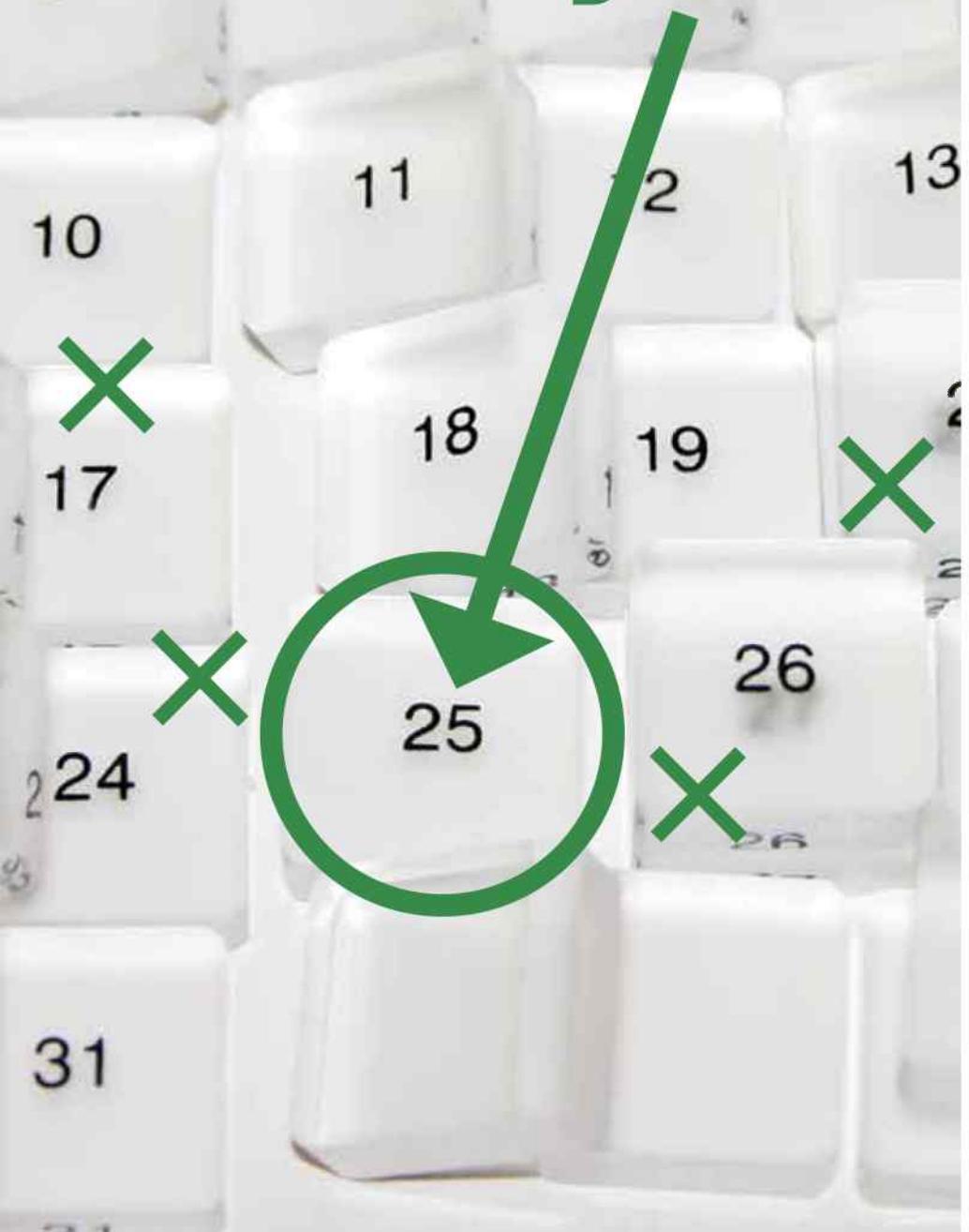
Finally, if you just want to escape these holidays, turn to page 31 and look at John's photos of Barcelona. Hold the images in your mind, close your eyes and get away!

I hope you have a great holiday and look forward to the new year.

**Kevin Pyle**

# Preparing for the holidays

The holidays are a great time to relax, recharge and catch up with friends and family, but they can also be a time of stress and anxiety. **Kevin Pyle** speaks to clinical psychologist **Valerie Rendle** about how to get through the holidays.



**KP:** The holidays can be mentally and physically demanding. Can you offer any advice on how to prepare for and manage the social demands of the holidays?

**VR:** It can be helpful to think about how much you can manage to do and what works best for you. For example, you may find it difficult to concentrate later in the evening or that a late night is difficult to handle, in which case planning daytime activities can work better.

It can also help to think about how you would like to allocate your social time and create a plan. Over Christmas, for example, you may want to go to family events during the day and spend time with friends in the evening. To ensure you get enough rest, you might like to schedule your quiet times in your diary.

When you are asked to do something that you feel is difficult for you, you might suggest that you go for a shorter time (perhaps asking them which time they would prefer) or say no and perhaps suggest getting together after Christmas.

It's usually easiest to thank people for the invitation and let them know what you are able to do, without going into details. If you are pressed for an answer, rather than argue about it, try thanking them again and repeating what you can manage.

It can help to remember that people who would like to have you there will usually have a good time if you can't make it and that it usually will not matter in a few months whether you went to a specific event. There are other times of the year you can be with people and enjoy their company if you can't manage to see them over Christmas.

#### **KP: Family gatherings are an inevitable part of the holidays. What's the best way to prepare yourself for what is likely to be a stressful time?**

**VR:** Extended family gatherings can be stressful at times. If you are worried about spending time with your family, it can help to:

- Be realistic – if your family tends to argue or be critical then they will probably tend to do so during Christmas
- Choose not to raise provocative subjects or argue and change the topic when things are heading in a difficult direction
- Notice if you are starting to feel stressed and take time out – go for a walk or even go to the toilet to break the tension
- Try to focus on the good things about your family rather than the differences.

#### **KP: If you are alone during the holidays, what can you do to keep your spirits up?**

**VR:** During the holidays it can be helpful to:

- Plan activities for yourself so that you are doing something each day – you might like to go to a community event, such as carols by candlelight, or treat yourself to a movie
- For Christmas day itself, plan something special for yourself – cook your favourite food (not necessarily turkey or pudding), watch a DVD, listen to music or read a book (libraries

often allow more books to be borrowed over the holidays) or even plan to watch some special TV programs – anything that makes you feel good

- Get up at the normal time and if possible go outside for even a short walk or sit in the sun
- If you have internet access, investigate the online chat sites you like – because of the different time zones, there is always someone to talk to
- Consider ways of making more social contacts for next year or reconciling with people you may previously have had problems with
- Volunteer or contact someone else you know is alone
- If you have people you can socialise with over the period, it may be helpful to talk to them even if you are feeling down.

#### **KP: What can you do on a practical level to help lower anxiety during the holidays?**

**VR:** The holiday period can also be stressful because we put high expectations on ourselves. We want to get everything right – the best present, the best meal – and we want to see everybody. But this can come at a personal cost in terms of energy and stress.

It can be helpful to accept the limits of what you can do (not everything can be perfect) and realise that other people are usually happy with what you can do. They may not be any happier or think any more of you if you put in a lot of effort to make something 'perfect'. Even if things go wrong, you can still have a good holiday.

If you are worried about your plans for the holidays, it can be helpful to:

- Write down the things that you have to manage and think about your priorities – where are your time and energy going to be best spent so that you can contribute while at the same time look after yourself
- Plan what you are going to do – make a list and do one thing at a time
- Say no to things you can't manage (see above)
- Make a budget and decide what is realistic and possible
- Go for simple food and presents (perhaps suggest a Kris Kringle)
- Write down your worries and think about whether they are realistic or whether it is more your tendency to worry. Consider whether there is

something you could do to help the situation or whether you could get some help. It can also help to accept that some things are beyond our control.

- Take time out.

#### **KP: What general things can we do to take care of ourselves during the holiday season?**

**VR:** When you are busy with additional activities or feeling a bit down, it is easy to stop spending the time and effort to look after yourself, yet it is at these times that you most need self care.

To look after your body and your mind it can be helpful to:

- Try to maintain a healthy lifestyle – eat healthy foods and get some moderate exercise, even a small walk can have a positive effect
- Try to get enough sleep – take early nights where possible and, if possible, spread out late nights
- Keep alcohol and cigarettes at moderate levels – if you drink alcohol, try drinking water or something soft as well
- Do something for yourself – make time for the things you enjoy and put aside some quiet time
- Get things out – talk to people or write down what you are thinking and feeling
- Do relaxation exercises – gentle slow breathing (10–12 breaths a minute) when you are feeling stressed can help you calm down
- Be aware of your energy levels – do a little less than you think you can to keep something in reserve.

#### **KP: The holidays often make us think of those we've lost. How can we manage feelings of loss and grief?**

**VR:** The holidays are often a time when we remember and miss people who are not here. We all have different ways of managing loss, some of us might prefer to be alone while others find it easier to be with people and talk about their loss. It's ok to feel sad or to feel happy and enjoy yourself – it doesn't mean that you have forgotten them. It can also help to spend some time thinking about people you miss and maybe to do something to remember them such as writing a letter to them or lighting a candle.

#### **KP: The end of the year is a time of reflection and looking forward to the new year. Do you have any tips on how to positively reflect on**

## **the year and how to create realistic new year's resolutions?**

**VR:** Some years are difficult and when looking back a number of negative events may come to mind. It can be helpful to spend a few minutes thinking about some positive things that have happened such as a caring GP or supportive friend or something you did during the year or about some of the good things about living in Australia. You may also like to try thinking about next year and some changes that you can make to improve things you are unhappy about.

If you want to make changes or resolutions, it can be helpful to:

- Choose one or two changes that you really want to make – it is a better to make one small change than plan several major changes that you are unlikely to achieve
- Make the goal specific and achievable given yourself and your circumstances – for example a goal to build up to walking several times a week may be better than a goal to start going to the gym for an hour and half, six days a week

- Break your goal down into small, specific, doable steps that are not overwhelming and make a specific time to do them – for example, if your goal is to stop smoking, the first step might be to make an appointment to visit your doctor next Wednesday
- Celebrate the small steps you make
- Accept that real change takes time and there may be some glitches along the way.

## **KP: What signs or symptoms should prompt us to seek professional help?**

**VR:** Although the holidays may cause minor temporary stress or distress, if symptoms of anxiety, loss of interest in pleasurable activities, low mood, hopelessness, social withdrawal or sleep problems persist for a couple of weeks it is time to see your doctor.

*Valerie Rendle is a clinical psychologist in private practice in Paddington.*

**If you are feeling depressed or suicidal, call Lifeline on 13 11 14.**

### **ACON counselling services**

Tel: 02 9206 2000  
Freecall: 1800 063 060

### **Albion Street Centre**

Tel: 02 9332 9600

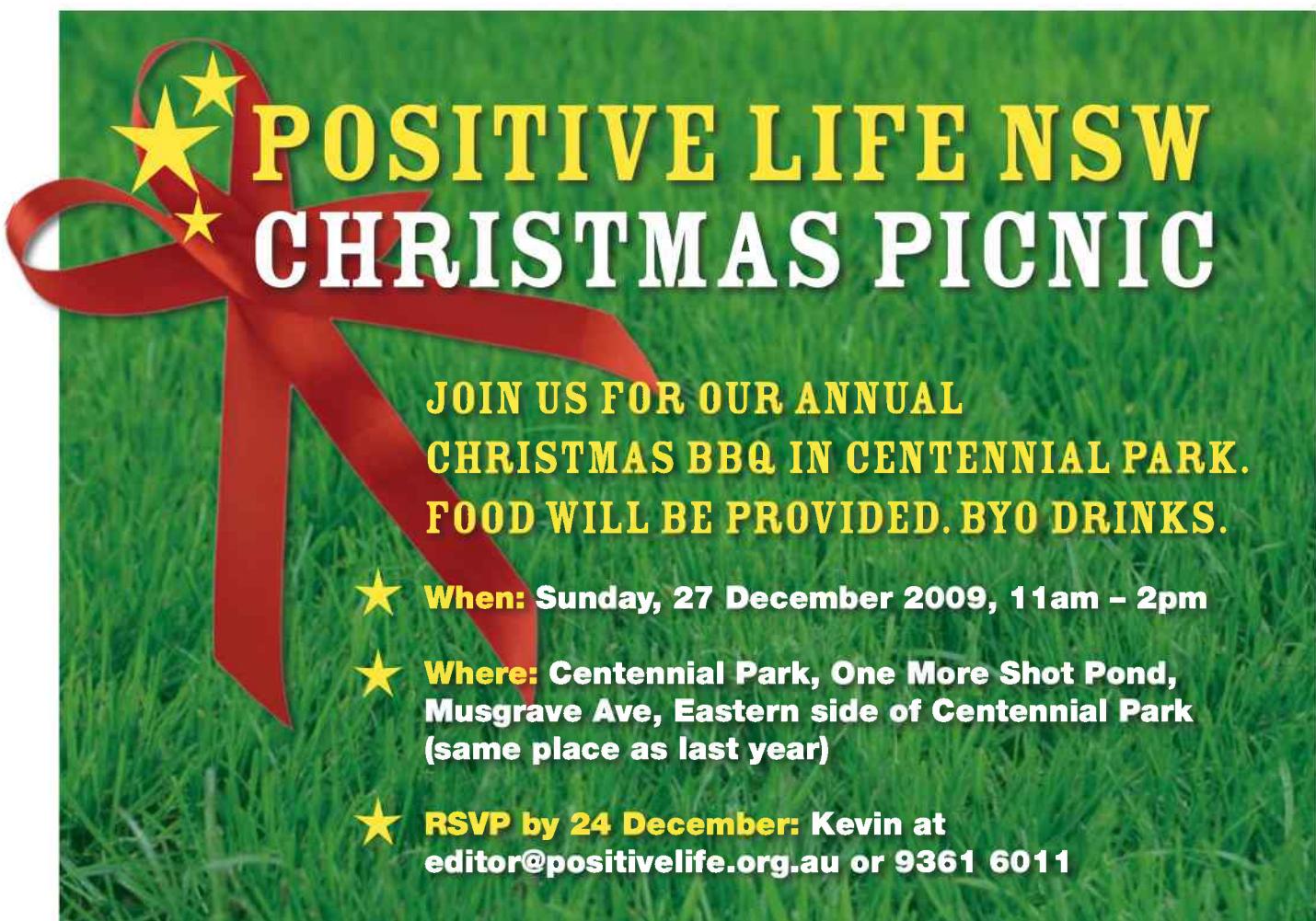
### **Beyondblue InfoLine**

Tel: 1300 224 636

### **Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service of NSW**

Tel: 02 8594 9500  
02 8594 9596  
Freecall: 1800 184 527

Please refer to the Christmas–New Year service hours on page 6 or visit our website for full contact information at <http://positivelife.org.au/content/need-talk>



The poster features a red ribbon tied in a bow against a green grass background. Three yellow stars are attached to the ribbon. The title "POSITIVE LIFE NSW CHRISTMAS PICNIC" is written in large, bold, yellow letters. Below the title, the text "JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BBQ IN CENTENNIAL PARK. FOOD WILL BE PROVIDED. BYO DRINKS." is displayed in yellow. At the bottom, three yellow star icons are followed by white text: "When: Sunday, 27 December 2009, 11am – 2pm", "Where: Centennial Park, One More Shot Pond, Musgrave Ave, Eastern side of Centennial Park (same place as last year)", and "RSVP by 24 December: Kevin at editor@positivelife.org.au or 9361 6011".

# Christmas – New Year service hours

The Christmas–New Year period can be stressful as many HIV services close during the holidays. You should stock up on your medicines and make sure you know when services are closing.

We've compiled information about the main Sydney services to help you plan for the holidays.

## ACON

Closes Friday, 25 December  
Re-opens Monday, 4 January 2010

## Positive Life NSW

Closes Friday, 25 December  
Re-opens Monday, 4 January 2010

## PLC

Closes Thursday, 24 December  
Re-opens Tuesday, 5 January 2010 (drop in only – no therapies or lunch service)  
**Note:** Therapies and meals recommence the week of 11 January 2010

## The Sanctuary

Closes Friday, 25 December  
Re-opens Monday, 4 January 2010  
Intake/referrals Monday–Friday, 9am–11am (response within usual timeframes)  
**Note:** To book appointments for the New Year, leave messages on 02 9395 0444

## Positive Central (Allied Health)

Closes Friday, 25 December  
Re-opens Monday, 4 January 2010  
Intake/referrals Monday–Friday, 9am–11am (response within usual timeframes)  
Medical Emergencies/PEP from RPA Emergency Department: 02 9515 6111  
Mental Health Crisis services available from Redfern or Camperdown: 02 9556 9100

## Luncheon Club

Closes Thursday, 23 December  
Re-opens Monday, 11 January 2010

## BGF

Closes Friday, 25 December  
Re-opens Monday, 4 January 2010  
**Note:** Bills for payment/financial assistance must be received by BGF by 15 December to ensure payment before Christmas

## Multicultural HIV/AIDS & Hepatitis C Service

Closes Friday, 25 December  
Re-opens Monday, 4 January 2010  
**Note:** A clinical supervisor will be on call, and can be assessed via telephone: 02 9515 5030

## Heterosexual HIV/AIDS Service (PozHets)

Closes Friday, 25 December  
Re-opens Monday, 4 January 2010  
Freecall 1800 812 404  
**Note:** Answering machine service available, but no response until Monday, 4 January 2010

## Pharmacy

### Albion Street Centre Pharmacy

Closes Thursday, 24 December, 1:00 pm  
Emergency services only – Tuesday–Wednesday, 29–30 December, 9am–3pm  
Closes Thursday, 31 December  
Re-opens Monday, 4 January 2010  
**Note:** Pharmacy will be closed on Tuesday, 26 January 2010 (Australia Day)

### RPA Pharmacy

Closed Friday, 25 December & Monday, 28 December  
Open 29–30 December 2009  
Closes Thursday, 31 December 2009  
Re-opens Monday, 4 January 2010  
**Note:** The pharmacy will open from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm Sunday 27 December and Saturday 2 January

### St. Vincent's Hospital Pharmacy

Open Thursday, 24 December 9:00 am to 7:00 pm  
Closed Friday, 25 December to Tuesday, 29 December  
Open Wednesday, 30 December 9:00 am to 5:00 pm  
Open Thursday, 31 December 9:00 am to 7:00 pm  
Closed Friday, 1 January 2010  
Re-open normal time Monday, 4 January 2010

## HIV emergency support

### New HIV diagnosis

Priority Service ACON 02 9206 2000

### HIV Hotline

Albion street Centre 02 9332 9700

### PEP

NSW PEP Hotline 1800 737 669

### Counselling

Albion Street Clinic 02 9332 9600

### Depression

Lifeline 13 11 14

## Medication

St Vincent's Hospital, Emergency Department 02 8382 1111

## Medication information

St Vincent's HIV Treatments Information Line 1800 454 510

## STI testing

Sydney Sexual Health Clinic 02 9382 7440 or 1800 451 624

## Other emergency

### Alcohol & Drug Information Service

1800 422 599

### Ambulance bookings

13 12 33

### Emergency Dental Info (after hours)

02 9369 1111

### Gay & Lesbian Counselling Service

02 8594 9596 or 1800 184 527

### Gay Men's Health Line

1800 009 448

### Multicultural HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C Service

02 9515 5030 or 1800 108 098

### NSW Sexual Health Infoline

1800 451 624

### Poisons Information Hotline

13 11 26

### Police, Fire and Ambulance 000

### Rape Crisis Centre

02 9819 6565

### Royal North Shore Hospital 02 9926 7111

### St. Vincent's Hospital

02 9339 1111

### St Vincent's Mental Health Crisis Team

02 8382 1911

### Suicide Prevention

1300 363 622

### Surry Hills Police Station

02 9265 4121

### Sydney Hospital Emergency

02 9382 7111

# What's News?

## After 22-year absence the IAS returns to the USA

The removal of entry restrictions on people with HIV by the US allows for the return of the International AIDS Society (IAS) conference to the USA, this time in Washington DC, for the XIX International AIDS Conference in July 2012. This follows US President Barack Obama's October announcement that the nation would end its entry restrictions on people with HIV effective 4 January 2010.

The last time the conference was held in the USA was in 1990 in San Francisco, California. Because of the travel restrictions on people with HIV imposed by the then Reagan administration, the IAS had boycotted the conference taking place in the USA. In 1992 the IAS Governing Council instituted a policy banning it from holding conferences in countries that restrict short-term entry of people with HIV and/or require prospective HIV-positive visitors to declare their HIV status on visa application forms or other documentation required for entry into the country.

IAS President-Elect Dr Elly Katabira, Professor of Medicine at Makerere University in Uganda, said "The return of the conference to the United States is the result of years of dedicated advocacy to end a misguided policy based on fear, rather than science, and represents a significant victory for public health and human rights." Dr Katabira will serve as the International Chair of AIDS 2012.

The International AIDS Conference is the leading event for people working

in HIV, policymakers, activists and people with HIV. The conference will be held 22–27 July 2012 at the Walter E Washington Convention Center.

According to current IAS president Dr Julio Montaner, "We are extremely pleased that the United States' new entry policy for people with HIV reflects its key role in global efforts to combat AIDS, and we urge other nations with similar discriminatory policies still in place to follow suit."

Source:

[www.iasociety.org/Default.aspx?pagId=386](http://www.iasociety.org/Default.aspx?pagId=386)  
[www.thebodypro.com/content/art54649.html?ic=700102](http://www.thebodypro.com/content/art54649.html?ic=700102)



## New WHO guidelines urge phase-out of major HIV drug

On 30 November, the World Health Organization (WHO) released *Rapid advice: antiretroviral therapy for HIV infection in adults and adolescents*. These new treatment guidelines recommend earlier initiation of antiretroviral therapy and the phasing out of stavudine/zidovudine, commonly known as (d4T), due to its side effects.

Long-term use of d4T has been associated with cumulative and irreversible side effects such as peripheral neuropathy and lipoatrophy. Although the use of d4T has declined globally from about 80% of people taking antiretrovirals in 2006, nearly 50% are still using a regimen with d4T, according to WHO. Because of its low cost and ease of use, d4T is widely prescribed as first-line therapy in low- and medium-income countries.

The new guidelines suggest that countries "progressively phase out the use of stavudine as a preferred first-line therapy option and move to less toxic alternatives such as zidovudine (AZT) and tenofovir (TDF)", which are equally effective. WHO indicated it would help countries to create plans to phase-out the drug without jeopardising treatment access or sustainability.

"[D4T] is the most widely used," said Dr Siobhan Crowley of WHO's HIV/AIDS department. "There is a trend moving away from it. We think it will take some time."

The new guidelines are available at [www.who.int/hiv/pub/arv/advice/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/hiv/pub/arv/advice/en/index.html).

Source: [www.thebodypro.com/content/art54658.html](http://www.thebodypro.com/content/art54658.html)

Hédimo Santana



# Getting the best from the system

**Lance Feeney** reports on Positive Life's recent work designed to help you get the most benefit from the health and insurance systems.

**Thanks to modern medicine, we are living longer – much longer. But, we need to manage side effects and deal with additional health issues, many of which are directly related to HIV infection and the drugs used to control HIV. Some evidence suggests that long-term HIV disease results in premature ageing. All of these factors impact on physical and mental health and are challenging.**

We need to be able to effectively use the healthcare system to maintain our health and wellbeing. The health system, however, is complex. It includes many different service areas: GPS; sexual health centres; allied healthcare providers such as physiotherapists, dieticians, nutritionists, acupuncturists, natural therapists and radiography; mental health services; dental services and hospital and emergency care.

It is unsurprising that many of us lack the knowledge and confidence to navigate and negotiate our way through the system –

particularly when we are feeling sick. And, if you have problems with the care you receive, your lack of knowledge about your rights as healthcare consumers can make you feel frustrated, powerless and confused.

These issues may be exacerbated if you are newly diagnosed and unfamiliar with HIV clinical procedures, or if you don't use the healthcare system very often and/or are disconnected from your community. Those in the community with poor education, mental health or drug and alcohol issues may also have significant problems accessing and navigating the system. For those of us living in rural and regional areas, we have the additional issues of distance and isolation.

Research provides a partial picture of the issues. Around 25% of positive people say they experience difficulty accessing at least one health or support service. Financial issues also play a part. We also know that a little more than a quarter of people have experienced less favourable treatment at a medical service as a result

of having HIV. This includes increased infection control, avoidance, breach of confidentiality, being treated last, refusal of treatment, being rushed through, harassment and abuse.

## Have your say on healthcare

To better understand the issues relating to healthcare access and how we can address the problems you face, we will be holding small discussion groups and face-to-face meetings in early 2010. We would like to talk with you about the issues that prevent you from confidently using:

- S100 prescribers and HIV specialists
- GPs
- Sexual health centres
- Allied healthcare services
- Mental health services
- Dental services
- Hospital and emergency services.

You can email [lancef@positivelife.org.au](mailto:lancef@positivelife.org.au) to register your interest or call Lance on 02 9361 6011.

# The evolution of insurance

A large international study published in 2008<sup>1</sup> shows that an individual starting successful HIV treatment aged 20 could expect to live to be 63, and an individual initiating anti-HIV treatment aged 35 could live to the age of 67. The study also provides evidence of the dramatic and continued decline in the risk of death among people with HIV since effective HIV treatment became available in 1996.

In 2008 there were approximately 18,000<sup>2</sup> people with HIV in Australia and around 9,500<sup>3</sup> (53%) of these live in NSW. Although this represents a potentially small market share, we are keen to work with the insurance industry to improve access to the range of insurance products and reduce discrimination.

Understandably, insurance has not been a high priority for most people with HIV and there is limited knowledge or discussion about insurance matters in the community. Since HIV is increasingly categorised as a chronic, manageable disease, interest in a range of insurance policies may be increasing as people with successfully treated HIV expect to live into their 70s. Mortgage protection, income protection, life insurance, travel and general insurance may be increasingly sought.

Some types of insurance such as life, disability and income protection, have routinely been declined or limited to people with HIV. You are required to disclose your HIV status for these types of insurance, as the insurer needs to assess its risk. If you don't disclose, the insurer will usually be able to avoid having to pay out a claim under the policy. Health insurance is an exception. You are not required to disclose your HIV status when applying for health insurance. There will usually be a 12-month waiting period for pre-existing conditions before a claim can be made.

The *Disability Discrimination Act (Australia)* allows insurers to legally discriminate against people with HIV, but only where actuarial or statistical evidence exists to support the decision.

## Have your say on insurance

We will hold small discussion groups and face-to-face interviews in early 2010. We want to talk with you about your

insurance priorities and the difficulties you have experienced when trying to get insurance. You can email lancef@positivelife.org.au to register your interest or to provide confidential feedback.

## References:

- 1 Antiretroviral Cohort Collaboration, *The Lancet* 26th edition 2008
- 2 National centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research, Australian Annual Surveillance Report 2008
- 3 HSW Health HIV Surveillance Data 2007

# Advocating for your health and welfare

**Lance Feeney** provides an update on the latest HIV advocacy and policy developments.

## New oral health clinic in Sydney South West

A new oral health clinic has opened at Royal Prince Alfred and Liverpool Hospitals for people with HIV. The clinic is free and provides an oral health assessment, teeth cleaning and scaling. If you require ongoing treatment, you will be referred to a private dentist through the EPC Medicare Dental Program or into a local oral health service such as the Sydney Dental Hospital.

- Clinics are intended for clients of Sydney South West Area Health Services (SSWAHS).
- If you receive HIV medical services outside of this area but work or live within SSWAHS, you need to be referred into the clinic by a SSWAHS. For example, a person might see an S100 prescriber in Darlinghurst, but live in Newtown. In this situation the person should contact a SSWAHS HIV Allied Health Service such as Positive Central or the Sanctuary and request a referral to the HIV oral health clinic.
- Appointments at the clinic are available on Saturday mornings between 9am and 1pm.
- If you have a low CD4 cell count, talk with your S100 prescriber about the need for prescribed antibiotics prior to attending the oral health clinic.

## Government reviews access to HIV drugs

In September 2009 the Commonwealth Government and the Pharmacy Guild of Australia initiated a review to examine the supply arrangements for drugs listed under S100 programs. S100 drugs include HIV medications and those drugs used to treat chronic health conditions. They can only be accessed through public and private hospitals. The objective of the review was to examine the supply of medications and to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the current system and how they apply to community pharmacy.

This was an opportunity for Positive Life to advocate strongly for the introduction of more flexible HIV dispensing models that reflect current realities, particularly for working people with HIV. We strongly advocated for access to community pharmacy dispensing where appropriate and three-monthly dispensing of medications where treatment regimes are stable and supported by the doctor and patient. This position is also supported by NAPWA, AFAO and NSW Health.

An options paper has been released that includes the issues that we raised, including:

- Allowing three-monthly dispensing of HIV medications in instances where the prescriber and patient agree
- Investigating options to allow community pharmacy dispensing where appropriate for HIV medications
- Having community pharmacies 'opt in' to HIV dispensing.

Positive Life and peak HIV organisations have responded to these options and we eagerly await the outcome from these discussions.

You can read our submission at [www.positivelife.org.au/files/PosLifeNSWS100%20submission.doc](http://www.positivelife.org.au/files/PosLifeNSWS100%20submission.doc) or request a copy by calling 02 9361 6011.

## Ban on HIV-positive people entering US ends

US President Barack Obama announced that the ban on HIV-positive people entering the US will finally end early in 2010.

A final rule removing the travel ban was published in early November. After a statutory 60-day period, travel to the US for HIV-positive individuals will no longer be the subject of special restrictions.

Moves to remove the ban on HIV-

positive non-US citizens visiting or migrating to the US started during the final stages of the Bush administration. In 2008, President Bush signed an act that repealed a law expressly forbidding HIV-positive non-US citizens to enter the US other than in exceptional circumstances. However, HIV-positive travellers were still forbidden to enter the country because of pre-existing regulations.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) approved the removal of restrictions on travel and migration to the US by individuals with HIV. Most of the responses the CDC received during this consultation were supportive of the removal of the ban.

Visit [www.hivtravel.org](http://www.hivtravel.org) for updates on HIV-specific travel and residence restrictions.

### **Sculptra approved**

Yes, Sculptra has been approved by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and is now a subsidised drug. However, the cost for the procedure to inject Sculptra has not yet been approved by Medicare. The cost for the procedure will vary depending on the

doctor you go to. We are currently waiting for the decision to grant a Medicare item number by the Commonwealth Minister for Health Nicola Roxon.

Currently, if you want to get Sculptra, the cost of the injections is estimated to be about \$250 per treatment. Costs may vary depending on who you see, so you need to discuss the costs with the doctor before making a decision to have the treatment.

Unless there is an urgent need to get this treatment, or you can afford to pay, we would advise waiting until a Medicare item number has been approved. We will publish updates in *Talkabout*.

You can find a list of approved practitioners at [www.lipoatrophy.com.au/](http://www.lipoatrophy.com.au/)

### **HIV Futures 6 – report available soon**

The HIV Futures research program is the largest of its kind in Australia. It is designed to provide HIV, health and funding agencies and HIV-positive people with a two-yearly picture of the overall health, wellbeing and social situation of people with HIV.

A preliminary summary of HIV Futures 6

is now available at [www.latrobe.edu.au/hiv-futures](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/hiv-futures) or from the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society on 03 9285 5382. The full report will be available in late December and you can email [hivfutures@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:hivfutures@latrobe.edu.au) to ensure you receive a copy of the report.

### **Criminalisation of HIV Transmission monograph released by NAPWA**

The National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS (NAPWA) has released the monograph *Criminalisation of HIV in Australia: Legality, Morality and Reality*. As Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG states in the forward, "The document addresses a subject that has engaged the national and international community for some time; but with growing urgency in recent years. It concerns the operation of the criminal law in the case of the deliberate or reckless transmission of HIV, generally during consensual adult sexual relations."

You can download a copy of the monograph at [www.napwa.org.au](http://www.napwa.org.au) or request a copy by contacting NAPWA on 02 8568 0300 or freecall 1800 259 666.

**Aquatic & Fitness Centre Access Card**

**Affordable swimming and fitness**

**Residents of the City of Sydney with either a Health Care or Pensioner Concession Card can apply for an Aquatic & Fitness Centre Access Card valid at Andrew (Boy) Charlton Pool, Cook + Phillip Park Pool, Victoria Park Pool and the Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre.**

**The card entitles holders to a \$2.00 swim and can also be used to access the gyms at the Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre, Cook + Phillip Park or Victoria Park for just \$5.50 per visit.**

**The card is valid for 12 months and applications can be made at any Neighbourhood Service Centre or the One Stop Shop.**

#### **Council locations**

**Level 2, 456 Kent Street, Sydney  
50–52 Darlinghurst Road, Kings Cross  
158 Redfern Street, Redfern  
160 St Johns Road, Glebe**

# Volunteering their story



Gus (left) and Mike pose in front of a painting by Mike

## Mike O'Keeffe

I grew up regional Victoria. I was arrested at 19 for a homosexual act. It was totally scandalous – shameful.

It made me move away to Melbourne where I worked in a series of diverse jobs. This included working for the Department of Education as a teacher aid in a school for students with severe mental disabilities in 1979 and the Victorian Deaf Society. This then led to working in a program for deaf youth teaching life skills, and, later, the Youralla Society which provides quality disability services for Victorians. I was later to join the board of The Deaf-Blind Association, the leading organisation in Victoria providing services to people with multi-sensory disabilities. Working with people with disability has made me more sensitive and aware of others.

I met my first husband on the very first night I went out to a gay bar in Melbourne. We were soon to move in together and raise his two children together. The relationship ended 12 years later.

From 1983, I volunteered at the Victoria AIDS Council for their version of CSN, home-care for people dying. Palliative care, it was in those days, and it was pretty taxing.

My husband died at home with me in bed on my birthday in 1994. By 1995, I lost the plot. I was emotionally drained and was sick. This was the year that I was diagnosed positive and started combination therapy. I started to use recreational drugs.

I gave up work in 1996. I was ill all the time: bad sero-conversion and diagnosed with depression. That year, I went to Sydney for a Sleaze Ball party and I've never been home since.

Due to my interest and tertiary background in the behavioral sciences (psychology), I was self-diagnosing and as a result started self-medicating. I had stopped the combination therapy in favor of crystal meth. It was a distraction from the depression and low self-esteem. Retrospectively, I was probably suicidal.

In 1998, I found that I had an infection in my heart and was on life support for

Mike O'Keeffe, 56, diagnosed HIV-positive in 1995, met **Gus Beadie**, 48, a recent import from Glasgow, through the Community Support Network (CSN). It soon became apparent that they had many similarities and common interests. Both come from rich life experiences and a strong bond developed. They shared their story with **Saysana Sirimanotham**.

a few days. When I was discharged from St Vincent's emergency, I partied at the Mardi Gras like it was my last two days. I returned to hospital and had subsequently had a series of transient ischaemic attacks (TIA) – 'mini' strokes.

A turning point in 2001 saw me dump the 'sex, drugs, rock 'n' roll'. I stopped hanging around the party people. I had no money as I had spent all of my superannuation. I locked myself in my flat and was living in squalor. I requested a CSN volunteer to help me with the cleaning but it didn't last long. I wouldn't let [the volunteer] do anything. I had a big guilt trip: It's my mess, I shouldn't need someone else to clean it up. Because I had always been on the other side of caring – raising children, caring for a dying partner, training volunteers to promote the values of living independently – my personal attitude was that I didn't need anybody. I thought other people are more deserving than me.

I started accessing the services of Positive Central in Redfern which was

pivotal. This included a social worker, the physiotherapist, nurse, psychiatry team and the cooking and nutrition program. I also started accessing the Positive Living Centre (PLC). Art was a big part of my rehabilitation, especially at The Pine Street Creative Art Centre (one of the initiatives of Positive Central). By 2002, I enrolled myself into TAFE NSW to complete an advanced diploma in fine arts. My artwork up to today ranges from assemblage, printmaking, photography, sculpture and painting to digital imaging.

## **Gus is a special person in my life now. I feel like I'm in his hands.**

I met Gus, who later became my regular CSN volunteer, for the first time in April 2008. I had requested CSN services and Gus had come with two other volunteers for a cleaning blitz. My house is cluttered with clothes and dust. I lost all my possession [once] in a fire after the heart surgery, so I hoard things from cookbooks to cooking utensils. I'm a cooking gadget queen. When you lose your things, you're nothing. I'm also very particular about whom I let in and I have an aversion to 'do-gooders'. I live alone and am quite solitary. At home, when I close the door, I close my inner sanctum.

I still have issues about other people cleaning up my mess. Part of my pattern is to madly clean up before Gus comes around – and then we clean together. I presently have peripheral neuropathy which hinders me. There was a lot of anxiety and shame about taking on a CSN volunteer. This required lots of counselling leading up to and during [the appointment]. For the first 12 months, I was paranoid that Gus was fed up with me and was going to leave. Gus rang me up one day from work in Parramatta and announced that he'd be coming around. He said, "I'll buy the cupcakes if you put on the kettle". My first reaction was that he'd give me the sack. It turned out that

he didn't and this was a turning point in the lessening of my paranoia.

I like Gus and enjoy his company. Because Gus was new to town, I could tell him things about Sydney – places to go and history of the city. We share books and DVDs, and both like Julie Zemiro's *Rockwiz* on SBS. He comes to all of my art shows.

Gus is a special person in my life now. I don't feel that he has ever been judgmental at all. I feel like I'm in his hands. If he stopped being my CSN volunteer we would still be friends.

### **Gus Beadie**

**Between 1982 and 1996, my partner [at that time] died of an AIDS illness, so its through my experience of caring for him when he was dying which gave me a picture of what it's like to live with HIV and to live with someone with HIV. It was a personal education. I recognise the courage that it takes to live with HIV – the self-esteem and health issues.**

From 1996 until today, I've been with my current partner and we lived in Glasgow until 2005, then briefly in New Zealand, before his work bought us to Sydney in July 2007.

Due to some complication with my visa situation when I arrived, I knew that I wanted to keep busy and had in mind to do some volunteering. I looked at various options online and the ACON website led me to filling in an application form to become a CSN volunteer. I was quite confident with the reason of why I joined and undertook the two-day CSN orientation course. It was informative, well-run and informal. I enjoyed the whole process.

The first time I met Mike, he was very pleasant and welcoming. Mike is familiar with my home town, Glasgow, and this was common ground that bonded us instantly. It became apparent quite quickly that his life experience, his politics and sense of humour was similar to mine and to people who I was spending time with. We are in the same age group.

Mike worked in the caring profession, as did my [previous] partner in Scotland who found it equally fulfilling. We had both gone through the death of a partner. There seemed to be some common history 12,000 miles apart.

I see Mike every second Sunday and we

always start with a cup of tea to find out what the other has been doing in the past fortnight. I've had visitors over from the UK lately and have been asking for Mike's advice on where to take them. Mike likes the theatre, the arts and cinema – so he's good for recommendations. We always have to lots to chat about – the normal kind of chit-chat that happens when you meet someone over a beer.

I don't see it as a routine shift. It might be different every fortnight – sometimes two hours, sometimes three. It depends on how we both feel. There might be visits where not a lot of work actually gets done and we might opt instead to go out for a coffee or to the shops, just to get out of the house.

When it comes to negotiating housework tasks, it's always on Mike's terms. What is important for me is to not impose what I think needs to be done – I'm there to lend support. Occasionally we'll attack a room and throw some stuff out. When this happens, Mike might do the culling and I'll do the dumping. During this process, I'll get a history of the things that he throws out, which is quite funny and revealing. Mike emptied out a wardrobe a few weeks ago which he couldn't fit in to anymore. I laughed because it was full of 'gladrag' – clothing that maybe a flighty young thing, one who was hoping to turn a few heads, would wear. It included items that I wouldn't know how to put on!

## **I look forward to my CSN shifts with Mike... it's a very comfortable relationship**

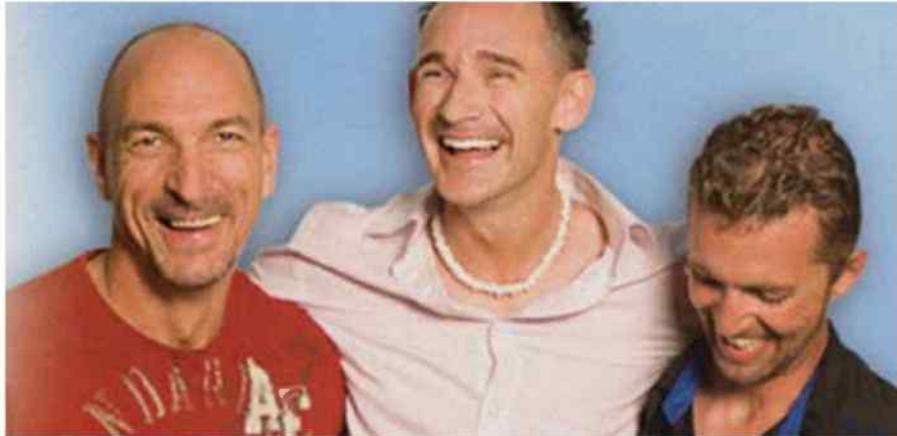
I'm still forming a relationship with Sydney. Having come from Glasgow and New Zealand, it was a bit of a culture shock – big and brash. Back home in Glasgow, it is very familiar and easy in the bars. I wasn't used to the way Sydney people socialise.

Sydney is home for the foreseeable future and I'm optimistic about it. Meeting Mike has helped in that respect. In learning about a new country, it was nice to be able

to get information about things that I read about in the newspaper and advice about things to see and do rather than just following the tourist brochures.

I look forward to my CSN shifts with Mike – it's not a chore. For me, it's a very comfortable relationship and it wouldn't have worked for me if it hadn't been.

*Saysana Sirimanotham is currently one of the Training and Recruitment Coordinators for CSN. He has been volunteering with this ACON project since 2005.*



Since 1984, Community Support Network (CSN), a project of ACON, has been committed to supporting the quality of life, independence and choices of people with HIV in New South Wales.

Practical home-based support and transport assistance, as identified and required by its clients, is offered without regard to mode of transmission, beliefs, backgrounds or sexual orientation. Light domestic tasks ranging from cleaning through to grocery shopping are carried out by dedicated volunteers who first undertake a comprehensive and mandatory orientation training course.

In 2009, CSN commemorated a 25-year milestone – a network which has grown into approximately 1,800 trained volunteers, with over 80 actively volunteering every week. Diversity is highly valued, with both clients and volunteers from all walks of life – gay, straight, pensioners, students, lawyers, men, women, families, people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and more.

For more information on CSN or to become a CSN volunteer, go to [acon.com.au/csn](http://acon.com.au/csn) or e-mail CSN at [csn@acon.org.au](mailto:csn@acon.org.au) or call 02 9206 2031, freecall 1800 063 060.

# Genesis

A safe, supportive weekend workshop for gay men diagnosed with HIV within the last two years.

**19–21 March 2010  
ACON's Positive Living Centre**

Genesis is designed to help you make sense of the range of issues confronting you after diagnosis. It gives you a chance to meet other guys in the same situation as yourself. This happens in a totally safe, confidential and supportive environment.

This weekend workshop gives you the opportunity to:

- Explore HIV and its impact on your life expectations
- Understand how HIV and your immune system work
- Get an overview of current and future treatments
- Understand HIV and its impact on your health, sex life and relationships
- Work out who to tell about your status and when to tell them
- Plan for the future
- Access services in the community.

Genesis is a collaboration between ACON and Positive Life NSW.

*"Thanks to a caring, sensitive and fun program that nurtured me through a very difficult time ... I still cannot stop spreading the word of what a great and important help it was to myself and the other newly diagnosed guys ... To those who are newly diagnosed, I can only say that I could now not imagine not having done Genesis. It helped me see a clear path to the rest of my life LIVING! With HIV." – Paul, July 2009*

**Contact:** ACON's HIV Men's Health Promotion Team

**Tel:** (02) 9699 8756   **Mobile:** 0439 959 119

**Email:** [hivliving@acon.org.au](mailto:hivliving@acon.org.au)

# A noble journey

Prince Manvendra Singh Gohil recently visited Australia on a whirlwind tour to promote the Lakshya Trust. Here he tells **Kevin Pyle** about the outreach and support work that won the 2006 UNAIDS Civil Society Award and continues to help countless people in Gujarat.

**Much has been written about Prince Manvendra Singh Gohil's personal odyssey. It often starts with his divorce and the nervous breakdown that led to his outing to his parents, followed by disinheritance then reconciliation and public appearances on TV shows around the world. Dubbed the 'gay Indian prince', his story captures people's imagination wherever he goes. However, the most remarkable thing about this royal is the difference he and a trusted network of friends have made through the Lakshya Trust.**

When I sat down to talk to Prince Manvendra, the first thing that struck me was that he appeared to be incredibly fragile. He had obviously been through a string of interviews and it was late in the day. He was reserved and slightly guarded or, perhaps, just a little exhausted by the media interest in his story. After following royal protocol, we were left alone to talk about his work and this is when he truly came to life. It was clear this is a man passionate about his cause.

"The Lakshya Trust was founded by myself and Sylvester Merchant in the year

2000. The idea was to create a platform for gay men to come together and share their personal issues so that we could jointly bring a solution to common problems faced by all of us: social issues, legal issues, marriage pressures, police harassment.

"Then we thought that we should start working on HIV prevention among men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender communities. We were fortunate that we got support from the state government and we were the first community-based organisation to work with MSM and the transgender population in the state of Gujarat," the Prince says.

Considering the social stigma relating to homosexuality and HIV in India, this was a big step. It takes courage and dedication to work with marginalised communities in a society that places so much importance on status and caste. I was curious to know what motivated the prince to start such work when he had still not fully come out.

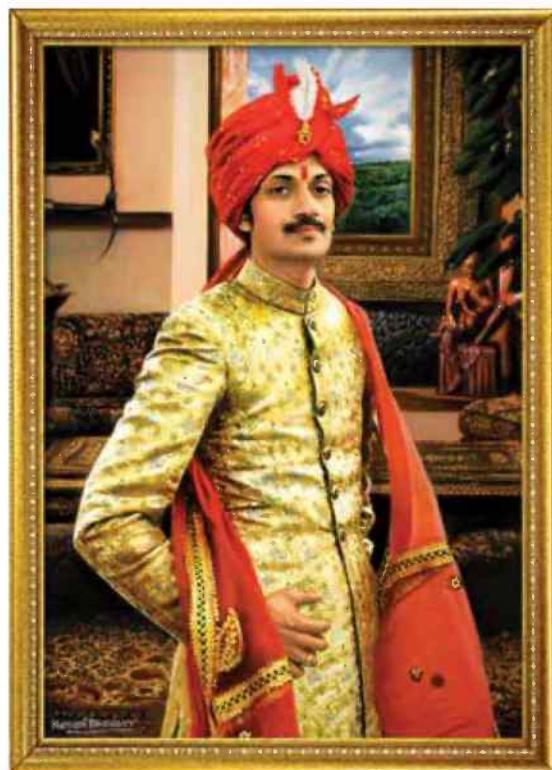
"Basically, I came out very late. I became comfortable with my sexuality at a very later age in life. I was confused about my own sexuality. I was made comfortable

with my sexuality by someone who happens to be the first gay activist in India and he was an inspiration for me.

"Ashok Row Kavi came out openly in the late 1980s and he was the one who not only made me comfortable with my sexuality, he removed the guilt feeling from my mind because most of us [in India] think homosexuality is a sin. He made me feel proud of my sexuality and he exposed me to the gay world," the Prince recalls fondly.

"Ashok started the first organisation [Humsafar Trust] in India to work on HIV prevention among MSM and he gave me the opportunity to work there as a volunteer. I was trained as a counsellor and made aware of the various STIs, how HIV could be transmitted – a lot of awareness was given to me. I found it quite interesting and I thought it would be worth starting something like this in my region of Gurjrat as there was nothing happening. Ashok motivated me and inspired me.

"We started as a group of friends, who used to meet in parks [a common way to meet in the absence of openly gay venues]. We thought why not organise



A royal portrait of Prince Manvendra Singh Gohil

ourselves and work together. Since that time, the government has been funding and supporting us and we are working in three cities of Gujarat [Baroda, Rajkot, Surat] and we've reached out to more than 18,000 men."

### The winds of change

This is quite an impressive outcome. It hasn't always been easy though. There were reports that when Lakshya Trust first opened in 2000, it faced extreme opposition from local residents who feared HIV infection. This reaction reinforced the need for the organisation, which deals with issues such as stigma and discrimination. So, how have things changed in the last nine years and has the recent decision on Section 377 (overturning the criminalisation of homosexuality) had any impact?

Sylvester Merchant, co-founder of Lakshya Trust, suggests that, "Things have changed now. There are many factors contributing to the change in India. I would say the National AIDS Control Program has made the issue of MSM more visible. Of course, the Prince's coming out has also made an impact."

we have to mobilise society, we have to motivate them and educate them."

Sylvester adds, "After Section 377 it's more about awareness building around people's perceptions and educating them."

There is no doubt that the Prince's profile has helped draw attention to homosexuality in India. But what impact has his coming out had for his friends and how does his royal status impact his work for the Lakshya Trust?

"Initially there were mixed reactions. A lot of my straight friends supported me, but a lot of my gay friends were not happy – they were scared that they would be linked to me and were uncomfortable because what it might imply about them and their sexuality," the prince states.

"I was doing the work long before I came out. Initially I had a lot of fear, but slowly, slowly as I worked with the community ... [I got] satisfaction, working for the community that you don't get in other kinds of work. That was the one thing that kept me motivated."

### Making a difference

Lakshya Trust is funded by the Gujarat Government for targeted intervention programs. It provides counselling services, clinics for treatment of STIs, libraries and condom-use promotion. Lakshya also creates employment opportunities for gay men and support for other MSM organisations. Its outreach work has been quite unique in its approach; targeting the female partners of MSM in their homes and distributing condoms in well-known gay cruising areas.

Lakshya is a member of the India Network For Sexual Minorities (INFOSEM) and a founding member of the Sexual Health Action Network (SHAN). In 2006, the Trust won the UNAIDS Civil Society Award for its contribution to preventing HIV among homosexual men. It has since expanded its work to supporting people with HIV and has established a separate, registered organisation Nokhyu Aikhyu.

Prince Manvendra explains, "A lot of our work is about prevention, which is what we are funded for, but, of course, being a community-based organisation we cannot overlook the issues of positive people."

"It has been over 10 years, so a lot of people have developed faith in us. They

are now coming and confiding to us that they are positive and this led to Sylvester developing the support group Nokhyu Aikhyu.

"Before we started Lakshya, we built up a very good, big network in Gujarat; a network of friends from all over our state and that helped us build trust in the community. We started providing services to our community and people started coming to our office and our drop-in centres to access services."

**Our services  
have been really  
appreciated  
and we have  
taken the lead in  
our state – Our  
team is really  
committed and  
dedicated**

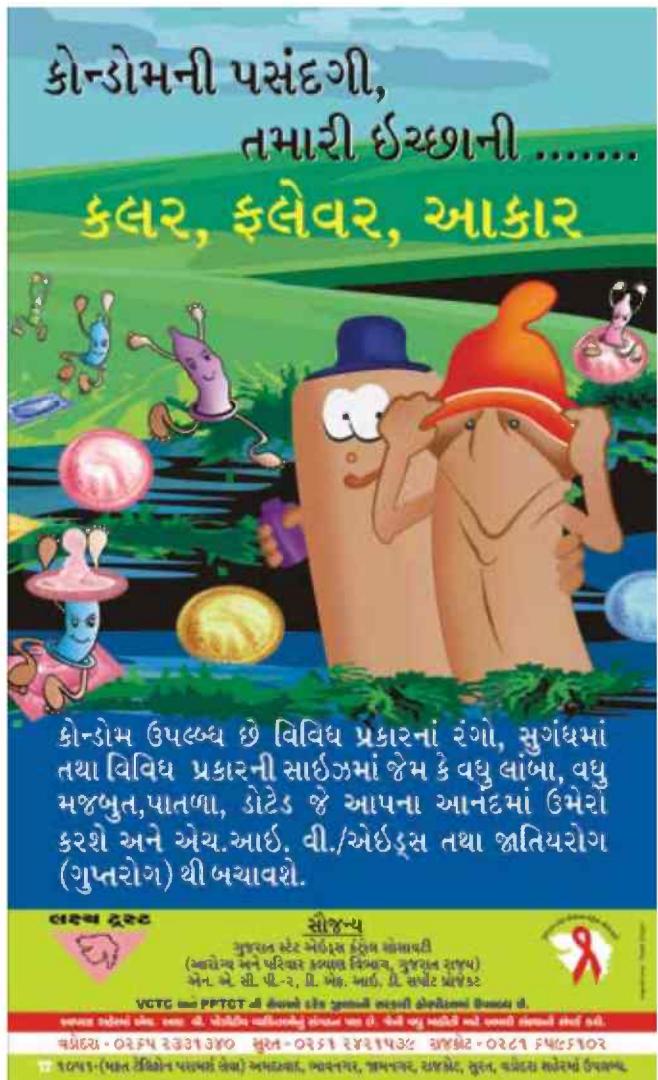
"We started with two centres and now we have three centres in different geographical areas: north, central and south. So we are able to access people in each of these areas; we have even reached out to the rural parts of our state."

"Our services have been really appreciated and the fact that we got the UNAIDS award in 2006 shows that we are appreciated and we have taken the lead in our state and our team is really committed and dedicated. A lot of our staff is positive and people started clicking with them and coming in."

Sylvester adds, "The idea for Nokhyu Aikhyu came because we were getting quite a few cases of positive men coming in and there were not really any other platforms for support. Quite a few of my staff are positive and are working for the outreach services for prevention and the group wanted a platform where they could raise their own concerns. Obviously their issues are different from those of negative gay men because their issues are more special in many ways. This is how Nokhyu Aikhyu came into existence."

**Lakshya Trust  
was the first  
community-based  
organisation  
to work with  
MSM and the  
transgender  
population in the  
state of Gujarat**

Prince Manvendra doesn't believe that the legal reforms will have an immediate impact. "Not many people know about the law in India and, in fact, not many people knew about Section 377. It was only when the judgment came that people knew about the law. But because of this publicity it put homosexuality into mainstream discussion. Any law, whether it's about positive people or gay men,



An example of the prevention work created by Lakshya Trust and the Gujarat State AIDS Control Society

A flyer promoting the services of Lakshya Trust



"It now functions in five cities and we have registered it as a different organisation altogether so it will take up its own work."

Lakshya has a strong relationship with the government run Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) Centres. These centres are responsible for monitoring HIV-infection rates and ensuring access to structured antiretroviral treatment.

"We run three large projects in different cities and we have a strong collaboration with the government-run ART Centres in each city. We have strong prevention programs and within these programs we provide HIV testing. Through these tests we get exact details on the number of persons who are positive. Then we try to link in with the centres so that positive people have their medications taken care of," Sylvester explains.

"Access to treatment was, at one point in time, really, really limited when HIV work first started in India. I would say even in 2006 it was quite difficult. It's become easier and you now need very few documents to take care of when you test positive.

"Initially when we started work it was difficult, because we didn't have ART Centres, but now we have infrastructure. All the treatment in the government-run centres is free, of course.

"In some regions it's very easy to get access and treatment, but in a very few regions in India the systems have not been totally set up. Fortunately, for the most part, treatment costs, care and support is mostly taken care of by government-run projects or health systems," Sylvester notes.

## **Supporting positive people**

For all their hard work, there is still endless work to be done. Stigma is still very strong in India, both for gay men and for people with HIV. The stigma and discrimination exists on many levels and is layered.

"I think being gay and being HIV positive have similar levels of stigma. The purpose of Nokhyu Aikhyu is to fight the stigma and discrimination of HIV within the gay community. It is the first organisation of its kind in Gujarat," according to Sylvester.

When it comes to degrees of stigma, Sylvester adds that “an HIV-positive woman might be taken in, but it depends on the circumstances. Generally people would still take in an HIV-positive man or woman who is heterosexual, but not a homosexual positive person. This was the basis of forming Nokhyu Aikhyu: to form alliances of straight HIV-positive persons and gay HIV-positive persons.”

When asked what they hoped to achieve as a result of their visit to Australia, the prince says, "We would look for some kind of capacity building with Australia to strengthen our projects because we are still new. Australia has experience doing work exclusively for positive gay men, so if we can get some inputs on this and how to make our work better it would be beneficial."

You can find more information about Lakshya Trust at [www.infosem.org/lakshya.htm](http://www.infosem.org/lakshya.htm) and the Gujarat State AIDS Control Society at [www.gsacsonline.org/index.php](http://www.gsacsonline.org/index.php).



# A Human Rights Act: What's in it for us?

**Douglas Barry** reports on the implications of a recent report on human rights in Australia and why we should take an interest in its findings.

In December 2008 the Australian Government had asked the National Human Rights Consultation Committee to conduct a nationwide consultation. Its terms of reference were to find out which human rights and responsibilities should be protected and promoted in Australia, whether they are sufficiently protected and promoted, and how Australia could better protect and promote human rights.

The Committee received 35,014 written responses – the largest number ever for a national consultation in Australia. In addition, about 6,000 people registered to attend the 66 community roundtables, which were held in 52 locations around Australia. On 30 September 2009, the Committee handed its report to the Federal Attorney-General.<sup>1</sup>

The report notes there are existing legislative protections of human rights including Federal and state anti-discrimination laws. However, the Committee found these are difficult to understand and apply, and can be amended or suspended, as in the case of the Northern Territory intervention. What's more, it notes there are inconsistencies between those laws. Who knows of any positive person who has successfully used the existing laws to remedy HIV-discrimination?

From the consultations, it is clear that the Australian community wants the public sector, with all its agencies and departments, to consider human rights in its policies, practices and decision-making. The creation of a human rights culture in the public sector would certainly improve the collaboration between government

and NGOs, such as Positive Life, that work in the human rights area.

## Do human rights matter for positive people?

Sydney disability consultant Phillip French participated in the negotiation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities<sup>2</sup>, representing several Australian NGOs. Phillip argues that:

"Human rights express fundamental or normative values but their application, particularly with respect to minorities, including positive people, will inevitably challenge existing power relations. 'Soft' options that would seek to promote greater recognition and respect for human rights through education, awareness raising and public sector policy development may assist in altering power relations over time and in some instances."

"However, in the absence of the incorporation of human rights into *hard law* there is no guarantee that this will be the case. If human rights are to be real for minorities they must be capable of being enforced against the status quo. For this and other reasons Australia requires a legislative charter of human rights, and one that provides for individual remedies when these rights are violated."

In other words, it's no good having the human rights of positive people recognised unless they are legally acknowledged at every level of government and enforced in our courts. Without a legal remedy for a breach of our rights, they become little more than nice-sounding ideas. As individuals, we can advocate for public services that respect our rights and have the courts decide whether those rights have been breached.

## A Human Rights Act

The report recommends that the Australian Parliament pass a human rights act. Such an act or charter of rights could be changed by parliament. This would be different from the United States model, which sets its Bill of Rights into its constitution.

The proposed act would set out both the civil and political rights to be protected and enforced and the roles of the three separate branches of government: the judges, the parliament and the bureaucracy. Between these three branches of our democratic system, there would be a 'dialogue' using the language of human rights. This, the report argues, would lead to a greater awareness of human rights and encourage public debate about our fundamental rights and whether public authorities respect them.

## A triumph for the elites?

There are media reports of what the opponents of an Australian human rights framework have to say. Claiming it would represent 'a triumph of elites and academics'<sup>3</sup>, they fail to argue the merits of the report's recommendations. Others complain that senior and middle-ranking public servants would have to attend 're-education classes' in human rights, conducted by lawyers.<sup>4</sup> But the education of public servants in human rights thinking is surely a valuable goal.

## The experience of other states/countries

Importantly, Victoria, the ACT, New Zealand and the United Kingdom among many Western democracies have human rights legislation. Their systems of

government have not ground to a halt. Their parliaments have not been dominated by 'unelected judges'. Their public servants have not been overwhelmed by the task of including human rights thinking in their decision-making.

What generally happens in these countries is that their parliaments are expected to pass laws that are compatible with their human rights law. The courts can issue a declaration that a piece of legislation infringes one or more of the rights protected by the human rights law. That's all. Whether the legislation is changed or not is then up to the parliament.

And again, when their citizens are affected by a public servant's decision, as well as making sure the citizen gets a fair hearing, those countries give the citizen a legally enforceable remedy in the courts for a breach of their human rights.

## Australia as a mature democracy

There will, of course, be practical obstacles and a cost to the taxpayer in implementing a new and effective system of protecting the rights of minorities. Many beneficial

reforms have come at a price and required resourceful planning. This may well be the only way that minorities, such as positive people, in this country ever get to enjoy readily enforceable protection of their rights.

Australia has led the way in HIV prevention. That success has its origins in respecting the human rights of those people susceptible to HIV infection. Protecting human rights works!

It's time that the next step is taken. As a modern democracy, Australia runs the risk of being left behind if it fails to provide an effective human rights legal framework to protect and enforce the rights of its citizens.

*Douglas Barry is a practising Sydney lawyer and distinguished member of Positive Life.*

### References:

- 1 National Human Rights Consultation Report (2009). Available at [www.humanrightsconsultation.gov.au/www/nhrc/nhrc.nsf/Page/Report](http://www.humanrightsconsultation.gov.au/www/nhrc/nhrc.nsf/Page/Report)
- 2 On 30 March 2007, Australia signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Press release available at [www.afdo.org.au/node/118](http://www.afdo.org.au/node/118)
- 3 Senator George Brandis in Paul Kelly, 'Human Rights report poisoned chalice' The Weekend Australian, 10–11 October 2009, p14.
- 4 Mark Gepp in Paul Kelly & Chris Merrit, 'Charter a recipe for chaos' The Weekend Australian, 10–11 October 2009, p2.

## Human rights at a glance

In simple terms, a human rights act is designed to incorporate the values of fairness, freedom, dignity, equality and tolerance into a legal tool that allows governments to measure policy against these values. This allows individuals to advocate for better public services and allows courts to determine disputes using human rights as a framework. It is hoped that a human rights act would encourage tolerance and respect in the community.

If a human rights act were passed, parliament would list the major human rights to be considered based on Australia's ratification of key United Nations rights conventions and declarations.

To find out more about the proposed human rights act, visit [www.humanrightsact.com.au/2008/](http://www.humanrightsact.com.au/2008/)



# THE PILOT STUDY OF COUPLES

If you are an HIV-positive man living in Sydney and your partner is negative (or the other way around), please go to [www.couplesandhiv.net](http://www.couplesandhiv.net) and fill in a brief questionnaire.

We aim to recruit at least 100 couples. Relationships of more than two partners are welcome.

**Contact:** Professor Andrew Grulich or Dr Iryna Zablotska on 02 9385 0900 at the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research

Conducted by the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research and supported by a collaboration of organisations including the National Centre in HIV Social Research, Australian Federation of AIDS organisations (AFAO), ACON, Positive Life NSW and the National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS organisations (NAPWA).

If this recruitment is successful, it will be used in a future cohort study of male couples/relationships in Australia. The information collected in this study will be used to better understand HIV transmission in couples and how to prevent it. It will be helpful to organisations like ACON, AFAO, Positive Life, NAPWA and the NSW Department of Health to develop better HIV prevention programs and recommendations.

*'Hello! Can I speak with someone who understands my culture and what it is like to live with HIV/AIDS.'*



**(02) 9515 5030**



Translating and  
Interpreting Service  
**131 450**

ENGLISH  
We can provide you with support and understanding for HIV/AIDS.  
Ask at this clinic for a brochure in your language.  
All services are confidential and free of cost.

AFRIKAANS  
Ons kan onderskraging verskaf wat MIV/VIGS aanbetref. Doe'n navraag by hierdie kliniek vir n pamphlet in jou taal. Alle dienste is vertroulik en gratis.

AMHARIC  
እኔዕስን ምርመራ በተመለከተ የገዢ እንደገዢ ተችል እና አገልግሎት የጥናና አርማ  
እኔዕስን ምርመራ በተመለከተ የገዢ እንደገዢ ተችል እና አገልግሎት የጥናና አርማ  
ማንኛውም አገልግሎት በሚልጥር የሚያሳይ ክፍና ነው...

BOSNIAN  
Mi vam možemo pružiti pomoč i razumjevanje oko HIV/SIDE.  
Pitajte ovu kliniku za brošuru na vašem jeziku. Sve usluge su povjerljive i potpuno besplatne.

CHINESE  
我們理解愛滋病病毒/愛滋病方面的情況並能為您提供支持  
請在這診所索取使用您語言寫成的小冊子  
所有服務都是保密和免費的

SERBIAN  
Можемо да вам пружимо подршку и разумевање у вези ХИВ-а/  
Сиде. На клиници можете упитати за брошуру на вашем језику.  
Све услуге су бесплатне и поверљиве.

INDI  
हम आपको एच. आई. वी/एड्स विमारे के बारे में सहायता और जानकारी प्रदान कर सकते हैं।  
अपनी भाषा में परिका के लिए इस क्लिनिक से संपर्क करें।  
गपी सेवायें गुप्त और मुफ्त हैं।

ITALIAN  
Possiamo offrirvi sostegno e comprensione per l'HIV/AIDS.  
Chiedete un dépliant informativo in italiano presso questo centro medico. L'assistenza che vi offriamo è riservata e gratuita.

POLISH  
Możemy Ci pomóc Ci żyć z HIV/AIDS i zrozumieć, na czym on polega. Poproś w klinice o broszurę na ten temat w Twoim języku. Wszystkie nasze usługi są poufne i bezpłatne.

PORTUGUESE  
Nós podemos lhe oferecer apoio e compreensão com HIV/AIDS.  
Peça aqui nesta clínica, um folheto de informação na língua Portuguesa. Toda a assistência é gratuita e confidencial.

SHONA  
Tinokwanisa kukubatsirai nerutsigiro uye kuti munzwisise nezve HIV/AIDS. Bvunzai pakiriniki ino zvinyorwa zviri mumutauro wenyu. Rubatsiro rwese haruna muripo uye hapana mumwe anoziviswa zvamunenge mataura pasina mvumo yenu.

THAI  
เราให้บริการช่วยเหลือและเข้าใจในเรื่อง เชื้อเอชไอวีและโรคเอดส์ ตามที่นักพัฒนาข้อมูลในภาษาของท่านได้ ที่คลินิกนี้ บริการทุกอย่างจะถูกเก็บเป็นความลับและ ไม่มีใครใช้จ่ายได้

TURKISH  
Size HIV/AIDS ile ilgili destek sağlayıp anlayışlı bir hizmet verebiliriz. Bu klinikte kendi dilinizde yazılmış olan bir broşür isteyiniz. Bütün hizmetler gizli ve ücretli.



Multicultural HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C Service

[www.multiculturalhivhepc.net.au](http://www.multiculturalhivhepc.net.au)

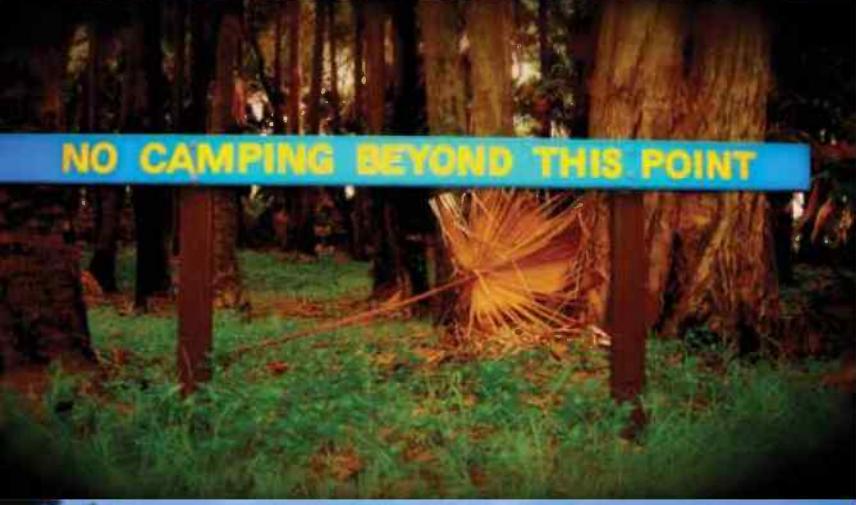


# Our journey continues

The Karumah Positive Live-In Workshop was recently held at Pacific Palms. This weekend allowed people with HIV and their carers to get away for some fun social activities and educational workshops. Here, two attendees share their personal experiences of this invaluable rural retreat.



A perfect Friday night, surrounded by friends, a cool pool and spa, a gentle sea breeze rustling through the palm trees and the rolling surf breaking on the sand ... it's great to be alive!



After a good meal, everyone settled into conversations as background music took the edge off and some good old-fashioned boot scootin' entertained the more adventurous (and co-ordinated); new friendships were forming and old ones were renewed.

The scenic lakes district has to be the best kept secret in Australia! A bit like sharing the secret of being HIV positive – shared with friends you can trust – and that was how the weekend began.



Saturday was down to some lively discussions and workshops with Hédimo from Positive Life NSW on looking to the future and what you want it to hold. We discussed the choices and steps we can take as longevity and ageing become the norm for positive minded 'positive people'. We also had a wonderful session by the delicious Glen from ACON who walked us through some of his journey and shared the sweetness he found along the way. Truly motivating!

The afternoon saw us touching on ways/things that help improve our quality of life: music, loved ones, social activities, positive proactive actions regarding health, diet and exercise ... and, of course, massages (thanks soooo much!). This all led us into an afternoon enjoying the natural surroundings.

Smaller groups enjoyed bushwalks round the lake and on the beach, a game of volleyball and some just lazed round the pool.

In keeping with the themes of good eating and diet, our wonderful hosts, Robert and Troy, made every meal delicious. They were supported

by the appreciative diners in doing the washing up and helping prepare the meals. Everyone pitched in and that is important, giving back, putting in and making an effort. You only get out what you put in and we all did, thanks to everyone.

The evening was rounded off with an infectious game of bingo with some fun prizes for those who could keep up with the numbers called, amid all

## **Everyone settled into conversations as background music took the edge off; new friendships were forming and old ones were renewed**

the laughter. Being the last night to enjoy our surroundings, many enjoyed moonlit strolls by the lake and intimate conversations in the spa and pool, during which friendships were cemented. However, room 13 proved to be as unlucky as the number suggested; or that's what its occupant complained!

On Sunday morning, we debriefed the weekend's activities. Other debriefings were left to our imaginations and wicked senses of humour!

After changing the tyre on the bus, we all decided that it was an oversight not to have some helpful lesbians along, because it would have been done in half the time! Hehehe. But the goodbyes were heartfelt and the weekend was an enjoyable, informative and a positive experience for all.

My grandfather wisely once told me he preferred the prospect of ageing because the alternative was far less attractive, that truth holds good for everyone, so take everyday as a gift!

So to those who didn't attend, and those who did, stay positive, stay well and make everyday count! Hope to see you all next year!

GG

## **GA's diary**

### **Thursday, 19 November**

T-shirts, check. Shorts, check. Speedos, check. Sheets, check. Toiletries, check. Pills, of course, check. List ticked, all packed. Everything else will be covered by the boys who organise the annual retreat/workshop. God love those guys. Although this is the fifth year, they have a huge job looking after 25 guys' needs and whims.

### **Friday, 20 November**

Had a bit to do before leaving, had to dust off the board games that I had forgotten to pack, organise the pets, get dad's shopping and drop it off. I'll get to the centre about 11.30 to help pack the trailer, because the bus leaves at 12pm sharp.

When I arrived there were familiar faces and a couple of new ones, which was good to see.

All hands on deck to load the food and all the odds and ends we would need. We were on the road at 12pm, after deciding we weren't going to wait for the late comer. It was 36 degrees outside – thank god for the air conditioning. There were nine of us on the bus. The three-hour drive was made shorter by conversation, making some new friends and lots of laughs. The sandwiches went down well.

We arrived at the resort just outside of Foster about 3.30pm (we had to stop for cold drinks).

A lot of the guys who decided to drive were already there. We unloaded all the supplies, had our rooms allocated, dumped our things and headed straight for the pool, because it was closer than the lake or the surf. We were at the same place last year and I'd forgotten how beautiful and quiet it is. It was great to see that some members of our group bought their children to enjoy the weekend with us.

Our organisers gave us an overview of the weekend and handed out our folders and name tags.

Before I knew it, it was dinner time and, as usual, plenty to eat. Too hot to be inside, so the terrace was the go and a perfect place for one from our group to share his boot scootin' knowledge and some new routines. Later, some went to their rooms early, some stayed up and chatted, while some went for walks to the lake or beach.

### **Saturday, 21 November**

I woke really early and I think I was the first up. I turned on the coffee urn, then

sat and enjoyed the peace and quiet for a while. As more of us surfaced, we headed for the kitchen. We barbequed the bacon and scrambled the eggs. There was cereal, yogurt, toast – you name it.

The first of our workshops was "Steps to Change" presented by Positive Life NSW, followed by lunch. The second workshop, "Journeys", was presented by ACON and this was followed by afternoon tea. We then had a couple of hours free time, so some hit the water, some sat and chatted, and others went for a nanna nap. Our final workshop was "Living Well and Healthy with HIV", again facilitated by Positive Life. We had some more free time before another great dinner (certainly couldn't complain about the catering).

After dinner we all played the most competitive game of bingo that I have ever been involved in ... followed by lots of socialising.

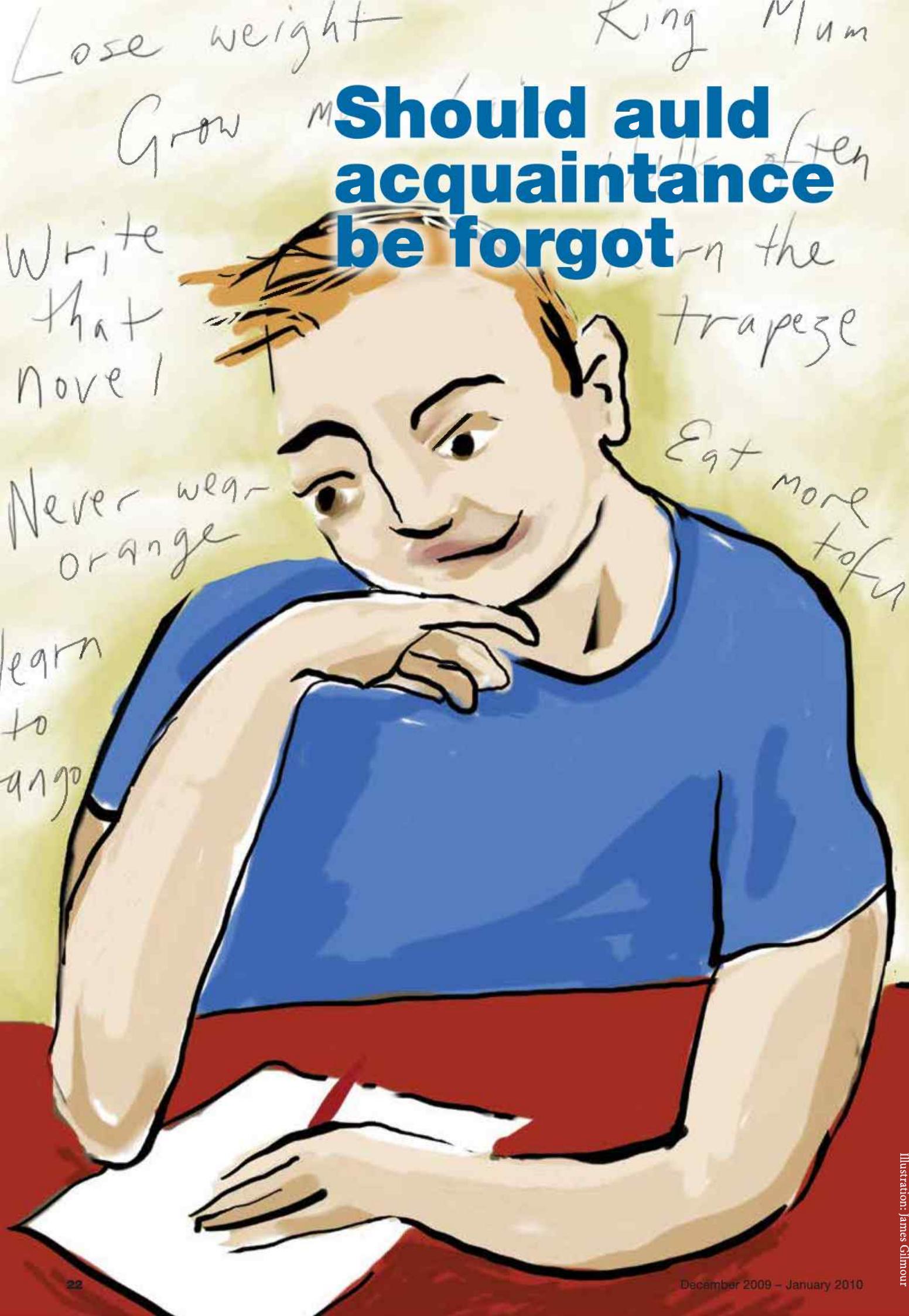
*I used the weekend to take time to relax, re-establish friendships and make new ones. I hope I brought that home with me.*

### **Sunday, 22 November**

Another big breakfast, then we all completed an evaluation form, thanked all those who organised and gave up their time to be there to help us, packed up, cleaned up, said our goodbyes and were on the road home by 12pm.

The trip home was quieter than the trip up and it was great to see our organisers finally relax.

For me, it was a chance to reflect on the past couple of days. I chose not to be involved in all the workshops. I used the weekend to take time to relax, re-establish friendships and make new ones. I hope I brought that home with me.



It's as traditional as having a big party on NYE, singing "Auld Lang Syne" out of key and kissing someone you will probably regret in the morning – yes, it's the new year's resolution. **Greg Page** dons his party hat and party blower to ring out the old and ring in the new!

**There's one thing that you can rely on, year after year (and I don't mean doing your tax return), it's that come the stroke of 1 January, you'll make a New Year's resolution and come end of December that year you'll think to yourself, "Now what exactly was it that I resolved to do this year?"**

So in the spirit of "Auld Lang Syne", let's take a moment to gather our thoughts and ponder – what exactly are NYE resolutions good for?

Of course we all promise ourselves we'll cut down on our drinking, smoking, cruising, chocolate intake, downloading internet porn, playing Bejewelled on Facebook, buying new iPhone apps and watching mindless reality TV shows on Foxtel. Resolutions, it would seem, are made to be not just forgotten, but more often than not broken.

So how can you actually make a resolution you can stick to? Perhaps, by re-setting your sites from the almost impossible to the readily achievable. Rather than thinking that if you go to the gym within three months you're going to look like a cross between a *DNA* cover model and Brad Pitt, perhaps a more realistic aim is that you'll feel healthier and will reassess some of those extra kilos wobbling around your tummy to firmer locales like your biceps, triceps and other 'ceps'.

Even cutting back on your cigarettes, slowly but surely, rather than deciding to give up from day one, is probably a better bet. Not only does it give your body time to adjust to the shock of being nicotine-reduced, but it's more likely that you'll keep to your resolution and actually achieve your aim.

That said, why not dream big? If you have something in the back of your mind that you've been thinking about for a long time – a trek through the Sahara, a new

career as a porn star, finding a boyfriend in Sydney who really does know what the word 'versatile' means – then go give it a shot. Ever heard the saying 'nothing ventured, nothing gained'? What do you have to lose? Taking yourself away from the ordinary, mundane and routine and exposing yourself (in more ways than one) to new ideas, adventures and people will certainly help put some more pep into your everyday.

It was no less a mere mortal than the Dalai Lama who pontificated that "happiness is not something ready made. It comes from your own actions". In other words, take charge of your life, your situation and your compulsive need to watch *The Real Housewives of Orange County* on a daily basis. Get out there and make your mark, do what you always promised yourself you would, be the person you want to be. Hey, no one else is going to do it for you. Now that's a resolution worth sticking to!

Other resolutions might not necessarily be about yourself, but about others; and not just those in your inner circle but in the wider world. Think of how random acts of kindness on your behalf can make a difference to people's lives. What about sponsoring a child through World Vision, so you are making a visible difference in a poor child's life? Or you could volunteer your time at the Positive Living Centre (PLC) if you have skills such as massage therapy or life coaching, or you're a computer whiz. By helping to make the lives of others better, you only help enrich your own life.

### *Get out there and make your mark, do what you always promised yourself you would, be the person you want to be*

The site KarmaSocial.me recently reported that new research from Harvard Medical School and the University of California suggests happiness is influenced not only by the people you know, but by the people that they in turn know. This

effectively means that happiness is spread through your social networks (friends of friends of friends of friends etc). So what are you waiting for – go make someone happy today, even someone you don't even know, by spreading some good karma!

Of course for HIV+ people the idea of making resolutions often takes on an even greater significance. It can relate to things like taking your medication on time and not skipping doses, exercising regularly to keep up body weight and mass, or eating more healthily so as not to give that nasty virus lurking somewhere deep inside, cause to rise up and create serious tissues 'n issues.

Remember that a good resolution is only a good one if it's attainable and you really can achieve it in some way or another. So start small, but dream big. Maybe then next year you'll really be able to pop out the fireworks and celebrate in fine style as your dreams become a reality in some way, shape or form. Happy new year!

## **The history of NYE resolutions**

Apparently the tradition of making resolutions dates back to Roman times around 153 BC from King Janus (not with a silent 'j', I might point out). As a mythical figure, Janus had two heads – which means he could look back on the past, but also look ahead to the future – and so he became the ancient symbol for resolutions. The Romans look to forgiving their enemies and exchanging gifts even before the start of the new calendar year.

In more recent times the song "Auld Lang Syne" has become the traditional song to sing at the stroke of midnight on NYE and dates back to 1741 when Robert Burns wrote this perennial classic. The translation of the title actually means 'the good old days' and although no one is ever too sure about the words (especially after a few pre-NYE drinkie poos), it's entrée to not forget old acquaintances still resonates strongly today. Just think how many text messages you get and send around that time, after all!

# After Hours

## snax chat chill

Have you been diagnosed HIV+ in the last few years? Want to meet with other newly diagnosed gay men? After Hours is a drop in night for you!

When: Thursdays,  
monthly from 7pm  
Contact: Hedimo on  
9361 6011  
[hedimos@positivelife.org.au](mailto:hedimos@positivelife.org.au)

**PositiveLifeNSW**  
the voice of people with HIV since 1988



**729**

**HIV positive and getting on with it?**

**Would you like to meet with other gay men living longer with HIV?**

**729 is a social discussion night for you!**

**Thursdays, monthly from 7pm**

**Contact Hédimo on 9361 6011**  
**Email: [hedimos@positivelife.org.au](mailto:hedimos@positivelife.org.au)**

**PositiveLifeNSW**  
the voice of people with HIV since 1988

# nomore butts

quit smoking for people with HIV

## QUITTinG

### ● benefits your health

if you are an HIV positive smoker this is one of the most significant ways to improve your health

### ● may take several attempts

the more quit attempts the closer you are to success

### ● builds confidence

you realise you can take on challenges and take control of your life

### ● is a choice you make

you need to be ready, set goals and make plans to achieve them



### Ready to quit?

Talk to your doctor / health worker or visit [www.nomorebutts.org.au](http://www.nomorebutts.org.au)

If you have a health care card and you need financial assistance for quit smoking therapies contact BGF on 9283 8666 or toll free 1800 651 011



PositiveLifeNSW  
the voice of people with HIV since 1988



Project of the NSW  
HIV Health Promotion  
Interagency

Supported by South Eastern Sydney Illawarra  
and Sydney South West Area Health Services

# Positive recognition

Friday, 20 November, was a big day in Hanoi. It was the day that the Vietnamese Government officially recognised VNP+, the Vietnamese Network of People Living with HIV. **Rob Lake** reports.

**Vietnam, a country of 86 million people, is estimated to have about 290,000 people with HIV in the country's 63 provinces. HIV is most significant in Bac Giang and Hai Duong in the north and Ho Chi Minh in the south.**

In Vietnam, as in many developing countries, people with HIV can access only first-line HIV medicines. For people who are resistant to these drugs, access to a broader range of medications is critical. Positive people with fewer than 200 T cells can get these drugs through the government. Otherwise, they must be bought, which is an expensive task.

Much of the HIV support work in Vietnam occurs through local positive clubs. These networks are spread across Vietnam, some public, but many are private. It is through these clubs that positive people are able to meet and talk with other people with HIV and access health information, support and HIV medicines.

Rob Lake met with VNP+ Co-Chair Hung Pham Quoc, just before the organisation was to be presented with its accreditation. He advised that the issues for people with HIV in Vietnam were mostly about getting access to second-line drugs, as well as being able to access HIV medicines earlier. For many people on medication, the focus has become returning to work and earning an income. At the same time, he spoke about issues of discrimination, the differing issues in various parts of Vietnam and the importance of understanding and meeting the needs of women with HIV.

VNP+ has been in operation for 6 years and during this time, it has achieved great things, both in local support for people with HIV across Vietnam and in being recognised by the Vietnamese Government, which is a major achievement. The government agreed to the recognition at this year's International Conference on HIV/AIDS in the Asia-Pacific (ICAAP) in Bali.

The organisation was officially launched on 24 November with the support of the Joint UN Team on HIV in Vietnam. VNP+ is mandated to provide training and create job opportunities for people living with HIV and those affected by HIV, conduct information and communication activities on HIV/AIDS and promote research and prevention, care and treatment programs.

"The network will act to empower those living with and affected by HIV to overcome stigma and discrimination and contribute to the national response," stated VNP+ representative Do Dang Dong. He added, "We look forward to a close partnership with the government, other civil society and with international organisations to best perform our role."

In Australia, Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad (APHEDA) has been supporting local positive clubs as well as VNP+.

If you are interested in finding out more, contact Rob Lake at Positive Life, [robl@positivelife.org.au](mailto:robl@positivelife.org.au) or 02 9361 6011.



# AFFORDABLE VITAMINS & SUPPLEMENTS

The ACON Vitamin Service provides quality vitamins and supplements at discounted prices to help maintain and improve the health of people with HIV.

Popular products include spirulina, zinc, co enzyme Q10, selenium and a range of nutritional supplements.

To access the service, you need a letter or ACON vitamin 'script' from your dietician, GP or complementary therapist indicating the vitamins or supplements that suit your needs.

Visit [www.acon.org.au/hiv/Vitamins](http://www.acon.org.au/hiv/Vitamins), email [plc@acon.org.au](mailto:plc@acon.org.au) or call 9699 8756 for more information.

## Fresh fruit & vegetable delivery

If you are living with HIV in the City of Sydney and surrounding suburbs, you may be eligible to have fresh fruit and vegetables delivered to your home for just \$9 a box.

The box has about 30 pieces of fresh fruit and/or vegetables and is delivered each week or fortnight.

The service is also available for older people, people with disabilities and carers, and those who need assistance living independently at home. You must be assessed for this service and places are limited.

Please call 9699 1614 or e-mail [coordinator@fdn.org.au](mailto:coordinator@fdn.org.au) for more information or a client assessment.

The service is provided by the Food Distribution Network, a not-for-profit organisation funded by ACON, the Bobby Goldsmith Foundation and Positive Life, as well as the HACC program.

## Come along to women's day at the Positive Living Centre

The third Monday of every month is a dedicated women's day at the Positive Living Centre

Informal drop in is from 10 am onwards

For more information call Samantha Fieldes at ACON on 9699 8756 or email [family@acon.org.au](mailto:family@acon.org.au) or see [www.acon.org.au](http://www.acon.org.au)





# The joy of pets **Diesel**

**Michael** explains how Diesel helped him through some pretty tough times.

**Diesel was 8 months old when I got him. He might have been mistreated as he took a while to come around to me.**

Diesel's a loud snorer. I think it is cute with him, but if he were a person I'd probably elbow him in the ribs and tell him to roll over.

He's a good little watchdog. Diesel doesn't usually bark; only when there's a strange noise. And, when he hears a siren, he mimics it and begins howling like a siren.

He is my best friend and I would probably be dead if it wasn't for him. When I was having chemotherapy for my leg, I had trouble getting up. I'd call him over and would push up off his back.

There were times when I was so sick from the treatments and felt so lonely that I felt like giving it in. But because Diesel was there offering his love and affection, and doing the little things he does to make me laugh, I found the strength and grew stronger each and every day.

I want to give thanks and praise to God for blessing me with Diesel. I couldn't imagine my life without him.

## Newly diagnosed HIV+? Want to talk?

**NEXUS is a peer support/  
discussion group developed  
exclusively for newly diagnosed  
HIV+ gay men living in NSW.**

**Participants are required to have  
completed or intend to complete  
a Genesis workshop for newly  
diagnosed men.**

**When: Monday, 18 January 2010  
7pm – 8.45pm**

**For more information about Nexus or  
Genesis, email [hivliving@acon.org.au](mailto:hivliving@acon.org.au)  
with your enquiry and contact details.  
We'll get back to you asap.**

**Light refreshments are provided. There is a no alcohol policy.**



So can you cook? No 38

# Summer Yuletide

**Tim Alderman**

I get really scared when I stop and think that it is 12 months since I last did my holiday column – it just doesn't seem that long!

**Christmas can be the one time of the year when our entertaining can really get out of control. I don't know what it is that makes us buy a lot more food than we need and pile it in front of people as though it was their last feed for the next 12 months.**

Being Aussies, we know that Christmas falls at the start of summer. It is generally hot, yet many of us still insist on carrying on with European traditions that in no way reflect the nature of our country or our lifestyle. Unless you are willing to sit in a freezer to eat, huge hot meals are really something to be shunned!

I've tried to put together a simple and relatively cheap Christmas dinner for you (or lunch if you prefer), without discarding the more traditional aspects.

I would also like to offer the following advice:

- If you like a traditional ham, but don't have the budget or you're cooking for one or two, try buying a small piece of ham and do a baked glaze on it as you would with a full ham, then serve it cold.
  - Chocolate puddings are available now and taste great with a delicious chocolate sauce and ice-cream. This is much more suitable than the standard Christmas cake or pudding. For a cake, make a light fruit cake or a plain butter cake with festive icing.
  - Seafood is cheap at Christmas and is a great way to go for taste and impact. It is also very versatile, lending itself to everything from cold meals to
- something off the BBQ. Likewise with poultry – let's face it, you need a huge oven to roast a turkey! A couple of chickens will go down just as well.
- Don't overfeed people. I really hate when people think that just because it's Christmas, I suddenly want to eat twice the amount that I normally do. I don't!
  - Instead of placing all the emphasis on food, make your table settings the centrepiece, and keep the food light and friendly. Use colourful tablecloths and napery, and drag out your best cutlery, crockery and glassware. You can brighten the table with candles and inexpensive decorations and tiny gifts such as crackers, poppers and novelties to add some humour to your meal (and a kitsch value).
  - Don't cram the courses one after the other, take your time. Start eating earlier than normal and allow time between each course so people don't feel rushed.
  - For a simple dessert, place some wedges of home-baked shortbread on a plate and serve with cream or ice-cream and some strawberries or mixed berries.
  - I shouldn't have to tell you this – don't sit in the sun and drink. Offer guests some light, fresh cocktails or mocktails that have fruit and citrus as their base. Along with a few nibbles, this is always a pleasant way to lead yourself into a great, casual meal.

I wish all my readers the very best for Christmas and the New Year. Keep yourselves safe and don't over-indulge.

## **Roasted Prosciutto and Bocconcini Salad**

12 bocconcini, halved  
12 slices prosciutto, halved  
8 large slices crusty bread  
Cracked black pepper  
Olive oil, for drizzling  
1 bunch rocket, trimmed  
6 roma tomatoes, sliced  
 $\frac{1}{3}$  cup basil leaves  
2 tablespoons olive oil, extra  
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

Preheat oven to 200°C. Wrap each piece of bocconcini in a slice of prosciutto. Place the bread on a baking tray lined with baking paper and top with the wrapped bocconcini. Sprinkle with pepper and drizzle with olive oil. Bake for 10 minutes or until the prosciutto is golden. Serve with the rocket, tomatoes and basil tossed in olive oil and vinegar.

Serves 8

## **Roast Pork Rack with Apples and Sage**

2kg pork rack (10 cutlets) with skin on  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup olive oil  
Sea salt  
4 green apples, cored and quartered  
2 tablespoons sage leaves  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
2 tablespoons brown sugar

Preheat the oven to 220°C. Use a sharp knife to score the pork skin at regular intervals. Rub the pork skin generously with the olive oil and salt. Place the pork on a rack in a baking dish and roast for 30 minutes or until the skin starts to crackle. Reduce the temperature to 200°C and roast for a further 25 minutes.

Place the apples, sage, lemon juice and sugar in a bowl and toss to combine. Add the apples to the base of the dish and roast with the pork for a further 25 minutes or until the pork is cooked through and the apples are tender.

Serves 8

## **Mustard Cream**

300g sour cream  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup seeded mustard  
2 teaspoons finely grated lemon rind  
Sea salt and cracked black pepper

Place the sour cream, mustard, lemon rind, salt and pepper in a bowl and mix. Refrigerate until required.

Serves 8

## **Coleslaw**

$\frac{3}{4}$  white cabbage  
6 green onions (scallions) finely sliced  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup flat-leaf parsley leaves  
12 radishes, thinly sliced  
Cracked black pepper  
**Dressing**  
2 eggs  
1½ tablespoons white wine vinegar  
3 teaspoons salted capers, rinsed  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup vegetable oil

To make the dressing, process the eggs, vinegar and capers in a food processor until smooth. With the motor running, gradually pour in the vegetable oil until the dressing is creamy. Set aside.

Slice the cabbage into thin wedges and place on serving plates. Spoon over the dressing and top with onions, parsley, radishes and cracked black pepper.

Serves 8

## **Green Bean, Rocket and Parmesan Salad**

1 baguette  
Olive oil  
500g green beans, trimmed and blanched  
2 bunches rocket, trimmed  
80g butter  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup lemon juice  
2 teaspoons finely grated lemon rind  
Sea salt and cracked black pepper  
Parmesan cheese, to serve

Thinly slice the baguette and brush with olive oil. Toast under a preheated hot grill until golden. Layer the baguette on a serving platter with the beans and rocket. Place the butter, lemon juice, lemon rind, salt and pepper in a small saucepan over low heat and stir until the butter is melted. Spoon over the bean salad and sprinkle with parmesan to serve.

Serves 8

## **Poached Fruits in Vanilla Syrup**

8 peaches  
8 nectarines  
8 apricots  
2½ cups raspberries  
2½ cups blueberries  
Vanilla syrup  
3 cups water  
1½ cups granulated sugar  
2 vanilla beans, split and scraped

Blanch the fruit by placing the peaches, nectarines and apricots in batches in a saucepan of boiling water for 30–60 seconds. Carefully remove the skins and set aside.

To make the vanilla syrup, place the water, sugar and vanilla beans in a saucepan over medium heat and stir until the sugar is dissolved. Simmer until the liquid is reduced by half. Pour the hot syrup over the blanched fruit and allow it to cool.

To serve, toss the raspberries and blueberries through the stone fruit and place in bowls. Remove the vanilla beans and spoon the syrup over the fruit.

Serves 8

## **Amaretti Biscuits**

200g almonds  
1 cup caster sugar  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup plain flour  
2 egg whites  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Preheat the oven to 180°C. Process the almonds and sugar in a food processor until the almonds are roughly chopped. Add the flour, egg whites and vanilla, and process until combined. Roll tablespoons of the mixture into balls and place on a baking tray lined with baking paper and flatten slightly. Bake for 13–15 minutes until lightly golden. Cool on trays and store in an airtight container for up to a week.

Serve with coffee or tea.

Makes 24

**ALDERMAN**   
provide   
Service | Quality  
Innovation | Imagination  
Gourmet Australian and  
Imported Food and Beverages

[www.aldermanprovidore.com.au](http://www.aldermanprovidore.com.au)  
[www.teacoffeechocolate.com.au](http://www.teacoffeechocolate.com.au)

02 9569 6537

# HIV positive and living in the Hunter area?

Why not check out  
Karumah Positive Living Centre

Social lunches  
Complementary therapies  
Discussion group  
Drop in  
Many other services

For more details phone (02) 4940 8393  
or email: [peersupport@karumah.com.au](mailto:peersupport@karumah.com.au)

[www.karumah.com.au](http://www.karumah.com.au)



## Queer Screen Free Membership

Queer Screen is offering free membership to anyone over 60 or on a disability pension.

For more information call  
02 9332 4938 or visit  
[www.queerscreen.com.au](http://www.queerscreen.com.au)



# Planet Positive

a social night for HIV positive people and their friends

When: Friday 19 February from 6pm to 10pm  
Where: back of the Carrington Hotel  
563 Bourke Street, Surry Hills

PositiveLifeNSW  
the voice of people with HIV since 1988

acon  
BUILDING OUR COMMUNITY'S  
HEALTH & WELLBEING

David Angel

# Cultural delights

**John Douglas** wandered the streets of the Catalonian city of Barcelona, photographing the city's well-known public art and architecture.

Barcelona is the second largest city in Spain and the capital of the Catalonian province. The city hugs the Mediterranean coastline and is bordered on both ends by river deltas.

Barcelona has a colourful past, and present. It is said to pre-date the founding of Rome and its residents experienced sieges and occupations for centuries, coming under Visigoth, then Moorish rule. This could explain the city's rich cultural life and the diversity and quality of its historic buildings and tourist attractions.

The city has been home to some of the 20th century's greatest artisans, including the Art Nouveau architect Antoni Gaudí, the Surrealist artists Salvador Dalí and Joan Miró, and Cubist Pablo Picasso. Wandering the streets, you can see evidence of these much-loved artists everywhere.

You cannot help but be in awe of the fanciful, sinewy lines of Gaudí's buildings or the stark contrast of Surrealist sculptures against centuries old buildings.

The L'Eixample district is home to many of these visual delights and is the heart of the gay village. The gay scene is full of life, though it doesn't really kick off until the wee hours of the morning. A short stroll away is Las Ramblas, a kilometer-long, tree-lined street full of performers, market stalls and cafes. You're sure to find plenty of visual treats in this part of town!

John Douglas shares the cultural delights he found on the streets of Barcelona.

## Miró sculpture, Ciutat Vella district

Joan Miró i Ferrà (1893–1983) was an internationally acclaimed painter, sculptor and ceramist. Born in Barcelona, Miró's surrealist work is seen as the manifestation of Catalan pride. His works are found throughout the city and at the Joan Miró Foundation in Parc de Montjuïc. See <http://fundaciomiro-bcn.org/>



## 1 Dali in the window

Surrealist painter Salvador Dalí (1904–1989) is held in high regard and he is liable pop up anywhere – if you feel an intense stare at your back it is almost certainly belongs to the mustachioed Señor Dalí.

## 2 Heart face

Street art offers ongoing visual delights with many beautiful and subtle variations – you just need to be alert to catch it.

## 3 Bull, Rambla de Catalunya

Created by local architect Josep Granyer, the ‘thinking’ bull marks the start of one of the most fashionable streets in Barcelona. It’s in the heart of the gay district of L’Eixample.

## 4 Orxateria

Orxata is a sweet drink made of tigernuts and sugar with water. Since the overthrow of dictatorship and return to democracy, the Catalan culture (very much repressed during the reign of Franco) has been promoted.

## 5 Sagrada Família Cathedral, L’Eixample district

Gaudí’s best-known work is the massive, but still unfinished, church of the Sagrada Família. It has been under construction since 1882 and is now financed by private donations. Apparently completion is planned for 2026, though many like myself believe that the ongoing construction has become such a draw in itself that there are certain to be ‘unexpected’ delays and the cathedral will remain incomplete for a long time to come.

## 6 Gay flags, L’Eixample district

The main gay area in Barcelona is called L’Eixample (or Gayxample). Barcelona really springs to life when night falls. Keep in mind in Spain most people head out to eat around 10pm. The bars get going after midnight, while most clubs only open at 3am. So, catch some zzzs if you’re planning some homosocialising! See [www.gaybarcelona.com/](http://www.gaybarcelona.com/)

## 7 Lobster, Ciutat Vella district

With Miró in the background, this giant smiling lobster adds to the surrealist urbanscape on the wide, palm-lined Passeig de Colom avenue. The sculpture was designed by Javier Mariscal, who also created the 1992 summer Olympic’s mascot Cobi for Barcelona.

## 8 Las Ramblas

This 1.2-kilometre long, tree-lined pedestrian boulevard runs from the port to the centre of the city, ending a few blocks before the gay district. It is popular for an amble, allowing you to socialise and admire the displays of artisans. Spanish poet Federico García Lorca once said Las Ramblas is “the only street in the world which I wish would never end”.

## 9 HIV educational materials

Lo Positivo is a quarterly magazine, distributed

free, that offers general information on HIV infection and its treatments. HIV/AIDS support information (Spanish) is available at [www.gtt-vih.org](http://www.gtt-vih.org) and [www.stopsida.org](http://www.stopsida.org)

## 10 Park Güell entrance, Gràcia district

Park Güell is a stunning garden complex rich in architectural elements designed by Antoni Gaudí (1852–1926). It took 14 years to complete (1900–1914) and is now part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site celebrating Gaudí works.

Count Eusebi Güell originally intended the site to be a housing estate, but only two houses were built. Gaudí moved in with his family in 1906 and the site was eventually transformed into a municipal garden.

## 11 Workers wall

Even in the relatively quieter nooks of bustling Barcelona it seems there are people being busy.

## 12 Horseman sculpture

Barcelona is a city with a high respect and affection for its artists, and many fine public sculptures are juxtaposed against magnificent architecture.

## 13 Pastries

Catalan pastries have been painstakingly researched by yours truly and come highly recommended!

## 14 Columbus Monument, Las Ramblas

Seeking to improve trade routes on a voyage partly funded by the Spanish royal court, Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) incorrectly calculated the circumference of the world and in so doing sailed into history. This column is sited at the spot where he returned after his first trip to the ‘new world’.

## 15 Casa Batlló, L’Eixample district

Spain’s most famous architect is Antoni Gaudí. Casa Batlló was remodelled by Antoni Gaudí and Josep Maria Jujol in the years 1905–1907. The locals affectionately refer to it as Casa dels ossos, ‘House of bones’.

## 16 Barcelona cityscape

Barcelona is situated on the northeast coast of the Iberian Peninsula, facing the Mediterranean Sea. It is the capital of Spain and largest city of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia.

## 17 Home, sweet home

My future residence, fingers and teeth crossed. See you there!

**For more information, visit:**  
[www.barcelonaturisme.com/](http://www.barcelonaturisme.com/)  
[www.stopsida.org](http://www.stopsida.org)  
<http://fundaciomiro-bcn.org/>

Photos: John Douglas

[www.JohnDouglasArt.com](http://www.JohnDouglasArt.com)





5



6



9



13



14



7



10



15



16



12



17



# Olga's personals

## Men Seeking Men

**Sydney Ryde Area.** Male 42 HIV pos since May 2007. 70 kg, 5 ft 9. Passive submissive seeking a dominant top guy in 30s or 40s. I like straight acting guys with good builds and cut. Have a foot fetish and I like light bondage. **Reply 070108**

**Country guy,** 43, poz, 183 cm, 73 kg, slim build, hairy chest, non scene and working. Interests are country life, animals, gardening and markets to name a few. Seeking someone special and LTR. Might be sincere, passive, no time wasters. Prefer someone over 30 and NS. You never know until you have a go. **Reply 190408**

**Nice guy** 43 HIV+ eastern European bottom like to meet nice guy with good shape for LTR for good times, quiet nights and to be happy together. **Reply 090508**

**Locked up and lonely!** 31 yr old HIV+ guy in jail, looking for mates and more. 6ft 3, brown hair and eyes, ok looking. I'm DTE with GSOH. Into music, movies. Open minded and fun to be with. Want a pen pal and whatever else happens. **Reply 150508**

46, HIV pos guy SW Sydney would like to meet poz guys to 55 for fun times and with a view to a relationship. **Reply 100708**

31YO Kiwi guy living in Rooty Hill, NSW. I'm affectionate, passionate, good looks. HIV+ 5 years. Looking for a guy(s) to share good times with and life. Into honesty, easy going, sensual and sexually uninhibited people. Age, nationality and beliefs no barrier. I'm very open, strong and happy. **ALA. Reply 150708**

Newcastle, early 40s HIV+ seeking friends, relationship, partner with similar to 45. I have many interests: music, some sports GSOH. Live Alone. Genuine and versatile. **Reply 261008**

**Sydney/Wollongong** – Slim, good looking bottom guy, 50YO, 6ft tall, short hair, clean shaven, fully waxed body, affectionate, good kisser. Seeking top guy, clean shaven, slim to medium built, 45-65YO. Like a few drinks and a smoker. VTPR. **ALA. GSOH. Reply 081008**

**Gay guy** 40 from Queensland looking to relocate to Sydney, searching for new horizons, including a genuine source of friendship leading to life commitment. I am quiet, trustworthy, reliable, dependable – daring to be different from your typical gay male. **Reply 101008**

51YO, HIV+ 22years, 173cm, ACTIVE/versatile, FF top, tattoos & piercings. I am not just looking for play but for that 1-1 connection with mind & body. Sydney. **Reply 031108**

**Central Coast**, attractive healthy young 34yo, HIV+ 10 years, undetectable VL. My interests include gay tantra, yoga, transpersonal psychology. Looking for friends, relationship, and a partner under 40 with GSOH. **ALA. Reply 041108**

**Kiwi male** 38 HIV+ GSOH DTE living inner west, working, in great health, 198 cm blue eyes, black hair, average looks. Looking for friends/buddies/partner. Open to suggestions. If you want to know more, why not take a chance and drop me a line, nothing to lose, a great friend to gain, maybe more... **Reply 201208**

**33 year old** newly diagnosed looking for mates (maybe more?) under 50 yrs. I'm into healthy living, yoga, swimming, gym and love getting into nature. Like socially conscious guys with warm hearts and compassionate souls who embrace life. **Reply 231208**

+ve W'gong 30YO. Smart, good looking, loves nature, professional btm ISO similar for whatever works (good times or LTR). Work in Sydney but prefer quiet life, would suit someone tired of things sceney and shallow. Nationality not important, chemistry is. **Reply 50108**

**Friendly**, passionate Greek/Aussie 164/79, 66 years old but well preserved and younger looking. Completely healthy AI condition. Looking for mature guy – looks unimportant but good character and disposition a must. Still employed and planning a good and optimistic future (LTR). Loves kissing, hugging and close intimate sexual encounters. Broad interests and curious about most things. Good conversation and well-read a necessity. **Reply 160209**

**Single 35 YO** active/versatile. Slim athletic body. HIV+ healthy ISO 18-35YO slim, skinny bottom/versatile. Looking for friends, relationship. I'm mild to wild in bed. WLTM adventurous guys with few limits. Pen pals into kink welcome. **Reply 180209**

**Mature HIV+** man living in Northern Rivers. I'm affectionate, caring & looking to share my life & experiences. 76kg, slim built,

fit & versatile. Age, nationality & beliefs no barrier. **ALA. Reply 070409**

**I'm a totally active guy**, well presented, and I would like to meet a quiet, easygoing, home-loving passive guy for a long-term 1:1 relationship. Looks & build are not important. You must be 100% totally passive, enjoy lovemaking often and be under 40 years. **Reply 220409**

35YO **Aussie** in gaol to 2010, looking for pen pals maybe more. I'm genuine, honest & caring. Love hairy guys & into leather. Very lonely. I'm 5'10" slim, 70 kg healthy dude. Love country living and animals. **ALA. Reply 140509**

**Nude yoga master needed** CBD or nearby. Mowhawked muscled PA pierced mature guy who enjoys the art of Ashtanga yoga seeks nude yoga with 1:1 gay teacher. **Reply 200509**

**Tall and dark and handsome**, late thirties, fit masc caring DTE genuine fun non-scene passionate top Aussie guy. WLTM other masc genuine poz guys for friendship, fun or LTR depending on chemistry. **Reply 250509**

**Mid North Coast** – 55YO HIV+ average build/looks, versatile, honest, DTE, GSOH, NS. ISO regular buddy for friendship and good times together. Age and nationality not important, but honesty, GSOH and discretion are. **ALA. Reply 290509**

**Melbourne, Victoria** – 48YO HIV+ guy, 5'10" short dark hair, blue eyes, goatee, muscular build (85-90kg) passionate & versatile. ISO F/Bs (or more) who are aged 40–50, are passionate & versatile, DTE + GOSH. **Reply 020609**

**Country NSW** - 35YO good looking masculine build (92kg) and Caucasian. Likes keeping fit and spending time with friends and family. Poz for three years and in great health. Seeking other poz guys up to 45yr with view to becoming friends and maybe more. **Reply 280609**

**Newcastle** – Mature guy, HIV+ for 20 years. Seeking genuine one-to-one friendship to LTR. I am caring, affectionate, versatile and well presented. ISO similar partner. 5'10, 34" waist, 69 kg. Prefers mature age and stability. Appearance/area no barrier. Just be yourself. **Reply 290609**

**Greek 32 years**, very fit, attractive HIV+ male, accounting finance student (Parramatta area) ISO specifically to make friends and have LTR with other guys. Must be very honest, healthy and hygienic. I am very straight acting and DTE. **Reply 160608**

46YO Oz-Poz GWM in good nick. Virgo/Tiger. Rural & O/S background. Well built 184cm/88kgs. Layback smoker only. Into music, cars and travel. City flat. Looking for compatible Oz GWM, DTE, GSHO, town & country, for LTR & Passion. **Reply 070809**

**Sydney Lilyfield area:** 48YO Poz guy, 78kg, mo + goatee, hairy chest, 5ft 8, non-scene. Looking for LTR with Poz guy to 55. Quiet nights, GSOH, single. **ALA. Reply 271009**

## Men Seeking Women

HIV+ undetectable and well, young looking, 48 looking for a woman under 40, healthy like me, non-smoker, non-drinker, for company and sharing experiences. Sydney. **Reply 210808**

**Mid North Coast NSW.** Straight young 48yo guy non user. HIV+ unstoppable in life. GSOH. Definitely individual but like us all has moments. Genuine, sincere, wants children, seeking lady wanting the same. Kids OK. Discretion given and expected in return. **Reply 150409**

**Carpe Diem.** 40 years young and attractive Sydney male. I'm kind, considerate, new-age spirited, intelligent and artistic. I want to meet a lady to adore, worship and share life forever. Hopefully I've made you smile! Seize the day! **Reply 160709**

**Looking to grow in love**, to be resourceful in how one lives life and transcends everything which can drag you down. Do interesting things. In my 40s, youthful, healthy, HIV+. 6 ft tall, Caucasian; Work at maintaining a good appearance and attitude. Is there a Soul to match? **Reply 061009**

**Victoria.** Youthful and energetic 38YO guy working in Melbourne, caring and understanding, and happy to have kids sometime. Seeking to meet that soul mate who accepts my HIV status and is happy to spend her time with me and enjoy life together. **Reply 021109**

ALA	All Letters Answered
LTR	Long Term Relationship
GSOH	Good Sense of Humour
NS	Non Smoker
ISO	Looking
For	
DTE	Down To Earth
WLTM	Would Like To Meet
GAM	Gay Asian Male
GWM	Gay White Male
TLC	Tender Loving Care

## When placing and answering personals

Be clear about who you are and what you are looking for. Too much detail can be boring, and too little may be too vague. Be honest to avoid disappointment for you and your correspondent.

Do not give out your work or home address, telephone number or email address until you think you can trust the person. Use a Hotmail or Yahoo address.

Like you, other people may be anonymous. You can't always believe everything you are told.

## When meeting someone:

Have reasonable expectations. Don't let your fantasies run away with you – how somebody seems might not be who they are face-to-face.

Meet for the first time in a busy public place, like a bar or club, or with friends. You can go to a private place after you have met the person and think you can trust them. Don't rely on the other person for transport.

Let someone know who you are meeting and where. You can leave a note, keep a diary, email a friend, or ask someone to phone you on your mobile to make sure you are alright.

Apply commonsense and the basic rules of personal safety. Maintain a healthy degree of suspicion: if anything seems odd, be careful.

## How to respond to a personal

Write your response letter and seal it in an envelope with a 50c stamp on it – Write the reply number in pencil on the outside – Place this envelope in a separate envelope and send it to Olga's Personals, PO Box 831, Darlinghurst 1300.

## How to place a personal

Write an ad of up to 40 words – Claims that you are hiv negative or claims about blood test results cannot be made. However, claims that you are hiv positive are welcome and encouraged – Any personal that refers to illegal activity or is racist or sexist will not be published – Send the personal to Olga, including your name and address for replies. Personal details strictly confidential.

You can use this form to apply for Membership or subscribe to *Talkabout*. Please remember to sign the form. A statement about our privacy policy is below. Please read it. Our contact details are below.

## Membership costs nothing - and includes a free subscription to *Talkabout*

Yes, I want to be a member of Positive Life NSW

### Please tick

- Full member (I am a NSW resident with hiv/aids)
- Associate member (I am a NSW resident)

**Disclosure** of positive hiv status entitles you to full membership of Positive Life NSW with voting rights. Members' details are confidential.

**Membership** entitles you to *Talkabout*, *Contacts*, the Annual Report and occasional newsletters.

## Subscriptions to *Talkabout* only

I don't want to become a member of Positive Life NSW but I do want to subscribe to *Talkabout* (annual subscription July 1 to June 30). Please select (tick the circle) the rate that applies to you or your organisation.

### Subscriptions only

- I am a New South Wales resident receiving benefits – \$5  
(Please enclose a copy of your current health care card)
- I am a New South Wales resident living with HIV who does not receive benefits – \$20
- I am an individual and live in Australia – \$33
- I am an individual and live overseas – \$77

### Organisations:

- Full** \$88 (includes all business, government, university, hospital, and schools either for-profit or government-funded)
- Concession** \$44 (includes plwha groups and self-funded community owned organisations)
- Overseas** \$132

## Personal & Health Information Statement

We collect this information to add you to our database and to notify you of information and events relating to Positive Life NSW. We store this information either in hardcopy or electronically or both. Access to your information is strictly limited to staff members. Your information will not be passed on to any other organisation or individual. You can access and correct your personal & health information by contacting us, phone 02 9361 6011 or freecall 1800 245 677, email admin@positivelife.org.au

- I acknowledge the Personal/Health Information Statement and consent to my information being collected and stored

## How to contact

**PositiveLifeNSW**  
the voice of people with HIV since 1988

Office: Suite 5, Level 1, 94 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst  
Mailing address: Positive Life NSW  
Reply Paid 831  
Darlinghurst NSW 1300  
You do not need to put a stamp on the envelope.  
Phone: 02 9361 6011  
Freecall: 1800 245 677  
Fax: 02 9360 3504

Name

Postal address

State

Ph

Email

## Donations

I would like to make a donation of \$

## Subscription to *Talkabout*

If you are paying the concession rate for *Talkabout* subscriptions, please enclose a copy of your Health Care Card.

You can pay by cheque/money order/credit card.  
There is a \$10 minimum for credit card payments.  
Please enclose your cheque or money order or give us your credit card details.

Please charge my  VISA  MasterCard

Expiry Date

Signature

Name on card

Total payment \$

Cash payments can be made at our office.

Signature

# Resources Order Form

**PositiveLifeNSW**  
the voice of people with HIV since 1988

Ordering organisation's name

Contact in organisation

Postal address

State

Ph

Fax

Email

Date ordered

Quantity Item

## Social Marketing Campaigns

**10 reasons to test for STIs** encourages regular testing for sexually active positive gay men. – **Available on the website only**

## Positive or Negative HIV is in Our lives

– **Fact Sheet 1 Living with Risk and Taking Control: Why do we take risks?** How do I manage risk and take control? If I have had unsafe sex what can I do to take back control? How do I deal with a positive diagnosis?

– **Fact Sheet 2 Positive Sex and Risk:** What does risk mean after a positive diagnosis? Do boundaries and attitudes to sex change? How do we think or talk about risk?

– **4 post cards with key campaign images**

– **Available on the website only**

**Getting On With It Again** *Living longer with HIV* (booklet) is based on stories and interviews and shares some strategies for change and enhancing the quality of life of people living longer with HIV.

**Get The Facts Syphilis** (booklet) updates HIV positive gay men who practice adventurous sex on strategies to maintain their health and the health of their partners. Key messages focus on transmission, the importance of testing for syphilis and strategies to prevent them from getting or passing it on to their partners.

**KNOW THE FACTS SEX AND HEP C** (booklet) updates sexually adventurous HIV positive gay men on hep C transmission, testing and strategies to prevent them from getting or passing it on to their partners.

**SERO DISCO Why let HIV get in the way of a good relationships?** gives gay men some practical ideas on how to look after each other in a serodiscordant relationship (where one partner is HIV positive and one partner is HIV negative). This can include everything from starting a relationship, disclosure, condoms and intimacy, relationship agreements, communication strategies, testing for HIV and STI awareness.

**One-off lifestyle magazine, 4 postcards with key campaign messages and t-shirt** (one design, black or white)

## Workshop Resource

**Let's talk about it (me, you and sex):** a facilitator's resource & workshop guide on positive sexuality. (160 pages)

**Simple Pleasures** (Workshop Guide) builds on material presented in our booklet **GETTING ON WITH IT AGAIN Living longer with HIV**. The workshop is designed to be used with HIV positive peer support groups or in HIV support groups facilitated by healthcare workers.

## All resources listed are free of charge.

For large orders we will invoice you for postage.

**Mail, Fax or Email Order to:**

Positive Life NSW

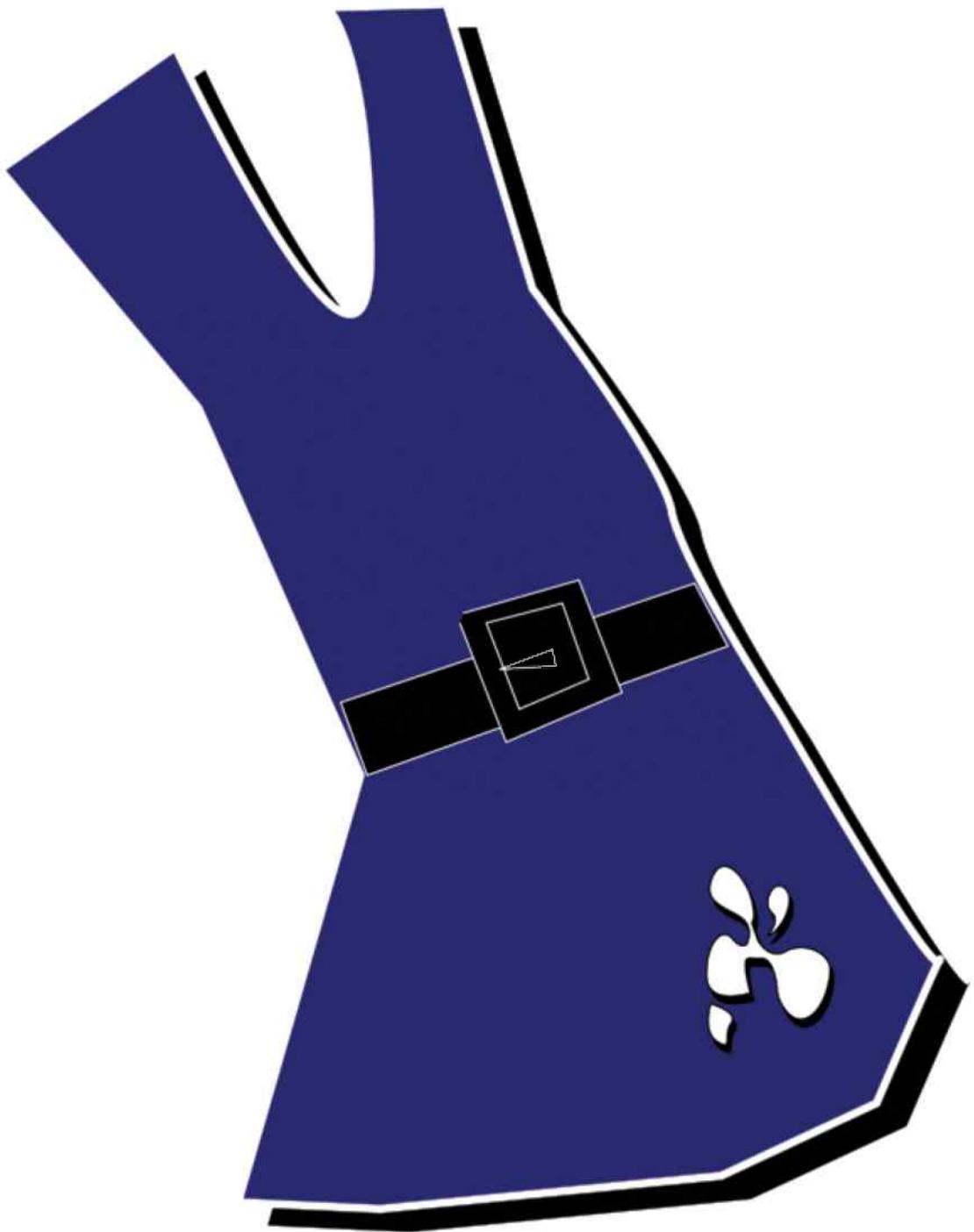
PO Box 831

Darlinghurst NSW 1300

Fax: 02 9360 3504 Ph: 02 9361 6011

Email: [healthpromotion@positivelife.org.au](mailto:healthpromotion@positivelife.org.au)

Website: [www.positivelife.org.au](http://www.positivelife.org.au)

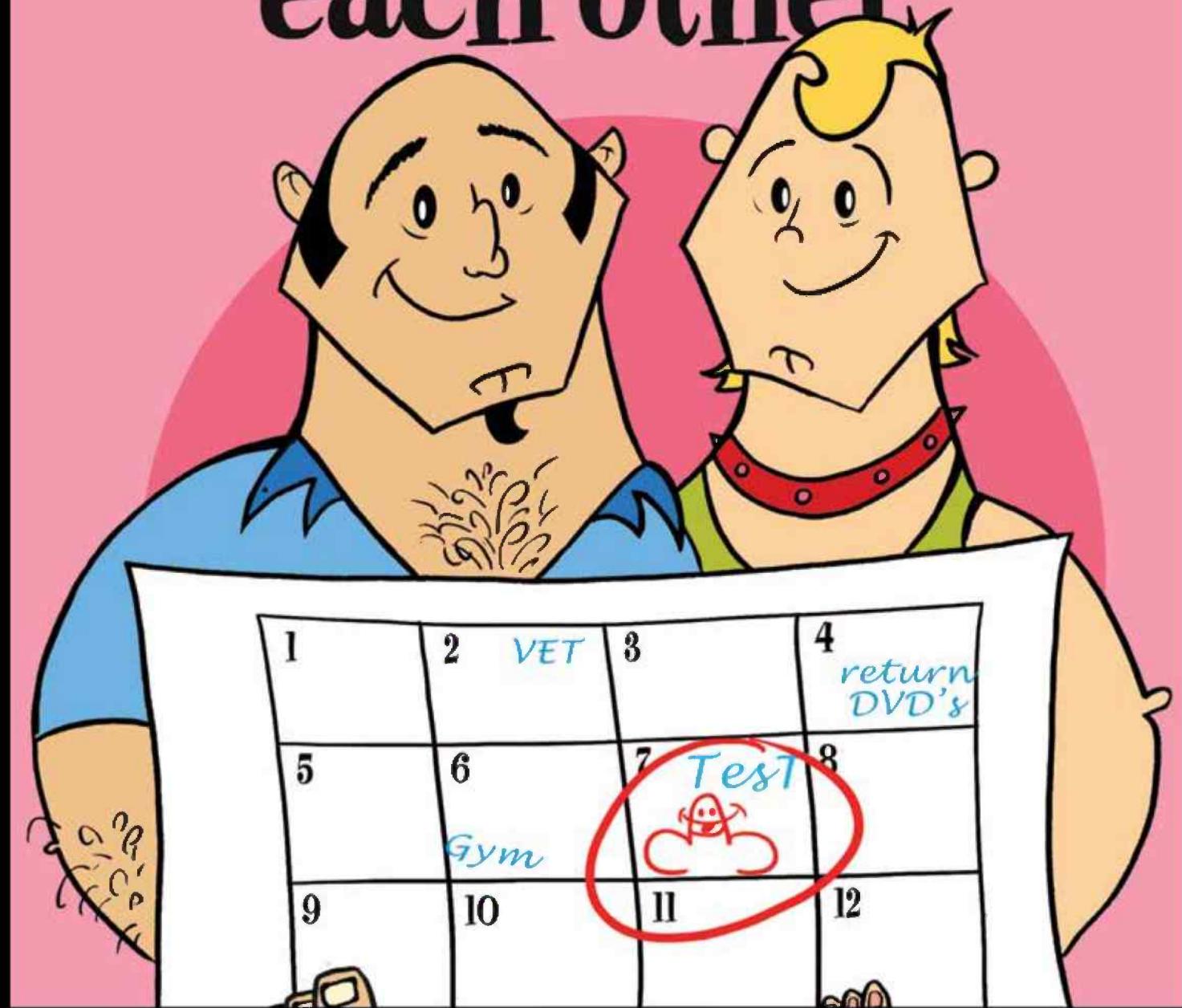


Researchers discovered a new protein that was strangely also found on Monica Lewinsky's dress...

Pojo

# Why let HIV get in the way of a good relationship?

**regular testing** for HIV and STIs  
means we  
always look out for  
**each other**



Andrew Georgiou

We look after each other  
We use condoms and lube

**PositiveLifeNSW**  
the voice of people with HIV since 1988