

talkabout

Where we speak for ourselves



#201 | February 2022 | ISSN 1 034 0866 | Positive Life NSW – the voice of all people living with HIV since 1988

2022
RURAL &
REGIONAL

TRAVELING WITH
HIV MEDICATION
**TIPS &
TRAPS**

**PAUL
MAUDLIN**
IN MY OWN
WORDS

MEETING
ANDREW
HESLOP



TALKABOUT

WHERE WE SPEAK FOR OURSELVES

EDITION #201

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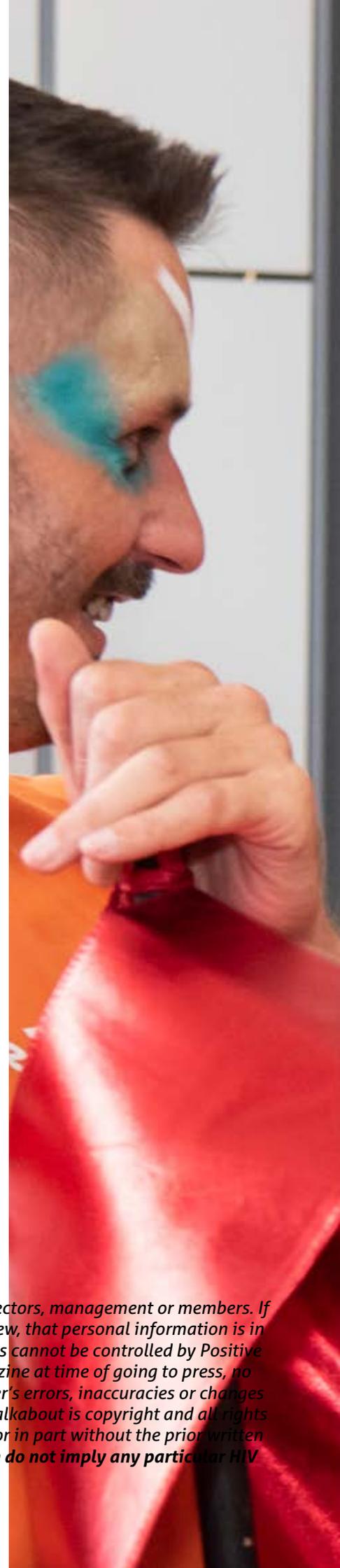
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Acknowledgement and thanks
to our eagle-eyed proof readers
for this edition

Cover photo: 2021 Positive Life NSW Mardi Gras Parade Group.

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RH Photography & Design

Talkabout in 2022 features new and continuing content focused on the experiences of all people living with HIV across NSW.

In response to feedback, Talkabout 2022 will include regular content based on the NSW STI data reports as they become available along with interviews with researchers and clinicians. Going forward, Hamish Bowden's 'Treatments Briefs', Barry French's 'Money Talks' and 'Nutrition Bites' from the Dieticians at The Albion Centre, will continue throughout 2022. New regular features include practical and topical legal issues from various team members at Seniors Rights Service, a short advertorial from Drew Browne at Unusual Risk, and an editorial by women living with HIV devoted to the particular issues of women who live with HIV.

As 2021 came to a close, the Positive Life team planned out a full body of work over 2022 including themes, campaigns, messages, events, surveys and dates for all our social inclusion support groups we hope to offer (pending COVID!). In 2022 we say, 'Let's leave no one behind!' and all our work will echo this overarching theme throughout the year. We've planned a number of community discussions, face-to-face with options to include the voices from those of you living rurally and regionally. We've pencilled in four regional trips in 2022 (details on page 15) along with regular 'day trips' reaching out to our Aboriginal brothers and sisters living with or at risk of HIV.

Early in 2022, we're looking at your 'emerging issues' after a short survey circulated from January to March (included with this Talkabout) emailed to Positive Life community members and a community discussion on Saturday 12 February.

Throughout most of 2022, we'll turn a critical lens on questions of HIV stigma together, to come up with peer-based solutions and recommendations alongside our academic friends and colleagues working in this space.

This year we need to increase our advertising options to keep Talkabout sustainable. Please get in touch if you have any contacts who might be interested in advertising in Talkabout or if you have suggestions for us to approach.

As ever, the mainstay of Talkabout will continue to be your stories and accounts about living with HIV. If you have a story in mind, or want to discuss some options, please get in touch. We can also interview you as part of 'In My Own Words' to make it easier than ever to share your story in Talkabout. Reach out on (02) 9206-2177 or 1800 245 677 or by email on contact@positivelife.org.au

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future. ■

CRAIG ANDREWS
EDITOR

EDITION 2 APRIL - #202

SUBMISSIONS AND ARTWORK: **FRIDAY 25 MARCH 2022**
DISTRIBUTION: **WEDNESDAY 13 APRIL 2022**

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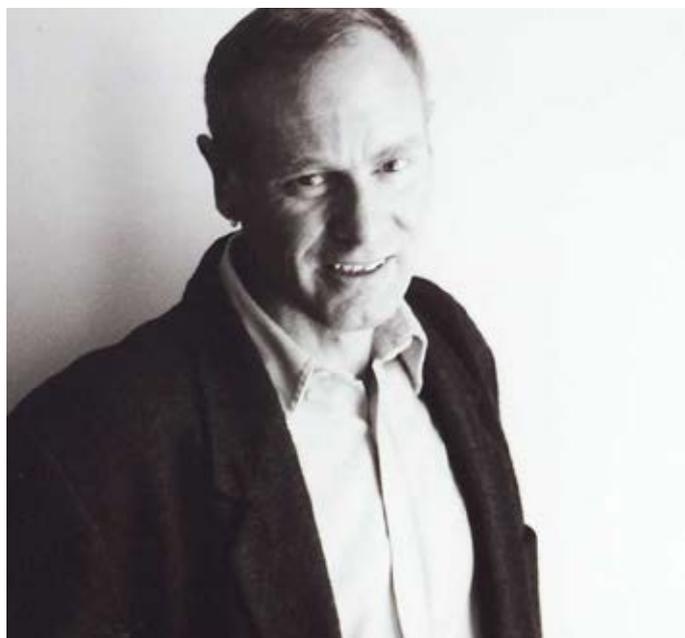
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RISE UP
against
HIV
stigma

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people
RISE UP

Self Made



Natasha Io - PLNSW Director

My partner and I had a very late, life threatening diagnosis in 2008. Now I am a 60 year old Transwoman living with HIV. Unbreakable and undetectable, still going strong.

2022 will be my fourth year as a Positive Life Board Director. Apart from being a speaker with the NSW Positive Speakers Bureau for Positive Life, this was a further way I thought I could 'give back' as many of the skills I had acquired from my previous career were transferable. Every person on the Board I have worked alongside brings a unique collection of skills embedded in a specific social and cultural perspective as an HIV+ individual. Only someone living in the community understands the issues and complexities of what it means to live with HIV. Initially, I thought it was only my organisational and critical thinking skills that were of advantage. As I've learned from working with others, there is also a wealth of unrealised skills and traits that once identified, is of great service in many roles across the work of Positive Life.

My HIV diagnosis in 2008 changed my life forever, to the extreme both internally and externally. In the early days of diagnosis it was a day-to-day fight for survival while at the same time stripping me of everything I ever held of value. In 2022 my thought process is; the person I am today is a result of everything that has come before. I like the person I am today and the future is not a place to be feared. As strange as it sounds, an HIV diagnosis was a wakeup call for me, it gave me a reason to want to live again.

HIV is not going away anytime soon. My major concern is hearing things like: "really I didn't think that was around anymore" or that condom use is 'not necessary' by some men. It horrifies me that such thinking remains after decades of HIV education. While the dedication to the prevention and education of HIV by elder members of the HIV community is strong, it is the younger generations who will have to pick up the torch on this and go forward in a society far more diverse and complex than it was for me, and this remains a concern of mine. ■

Tim Bishop - PLNSW Director

I must have tested positive about 30 years ago now. It afforded me life membership of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) back then. Well I'm still alive and still a member, and now I'm on the Board of Positive Life NSW for a second year.

Harking back to my years of living with the epidemic before treatments, I've always regarded 'Poslife' as our Union, though our membership isn't as workers, it's as people living with HIV. Our agency serves the same purpose as a union; to create a better life for its members, in our case HIV positive people. And it is positive people who've worked hard in serving positive people to achieve a great deal of betterment in our lives.

Today we are still people living with HIV; some of us are new to this and some, like me, have been here for a while. We all still need to be supported in our lives, everybody does, and we still have our agency and our people who work for us, to turn to.

While being HIV-positive is the one thing that we all have in common as members of Positive Life, we come from diverse backgrounds and communities. Where we might sometimes not find the acceptance as a positive person we deserve amongst our people, we can find it in our positive community.

The thing I'd most like to see stepped up to improve our support network is more dialogue across the diverse groups, from one to another. To achieve this, some of us may need to surrender some of the space we occupy and some may need to seize the opportunities and come forward to ensure our voices are heard.

As a Director on the Board of Positive Life NSW, I'm here to represent your interests and am accountable to the organisation and to you. ■



The NSW Body Positive is represented across a range of NSW HIV/AIDS community partners. Below are brief details of topics, events and issues that impact the interests of people living with HIV in NSW.

CATCHING UP WITH YOU

After two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, Positive Life starts 2022 by reaching out to the NSW Body Positive, all people living with HIV in NSW including people affected by HIV (such as friends, partners and family members) about your concerns, issues or challenges that are central to your lives at this time and going forward. An online survey (a printed copy accompanies this Talkabout with a reply paid envelope) is part of a seven week consultation process which includes a face-to-face consultation forum (pending COVID restrictions).

The survey will inform the Positive Life Board from a governance perspective, and guide staff who engage on a daily basis with community members, as well as offer insights into the lived experience of HIV in a time of pandemic, through a Community Consultation Forum and Community Report published and shared with community.

PEER2PEER EXPANDS!

Our popular Peer2Peer social inclusion support group which welcomes all gay and bisexual men living with HIV regardless of age or how long you have been living with HIV is expanding! The group will also be run in partnership with Karumah, an organisation that provides support to people living with HIV and their supporters in the Hunter-New England region.

Peer2Peer Karumah will run on the alternate month to the Peer2Peer that is normally run in Sydney. If you are interested in finding out more please phone Andrew Heslop on (02) 9206 2177, 1800 245 677 or email contact@positivelife.org.au.

RURAL/REGIONAL OUTREACH

Positive Life regularly travels to regional, rural and remote locations in NSW to offer a minimum of four rural outreach sessions per year, to listen and hear what it's like for people living with HIV in regional and rural areas of NSW. At these outreach sessions we offer people living with HIV an opportunity to sit down and talk with someone else living with HIV, and share stories and strategies to live well with HIV.

The current timetable (pending COVID restrictions) is on page 15 and also on our website at www.positivelife.org.au/services/regional-and-rural/. Please get in touch if you live in these rural or regional areas so we can send you more details and information.

BGF ONLINE EVENTS

The Bobby Goldsmith Foundation (BGF) is running a book club and a gentle exercise QiGong class online. The Novel Connections book club also runs for six weeks from Wednesday 2 February (each Wednesday 12noon to 1.30pm).

QiGong is a gentle exercise routine that promotes mindfulness and flexibility and will be taught by Chi Gong and Tai Chi instructor, Kerry-Anne Knibbs, for six weeks from Tuesday 8 February each Tuesday 11am to 12noon.

For these and more online events please visit the Bobby Goldsmith Foundation website at www.bgf.org.au and navigate to their Health & Wellbeing Programs section. If you are interested in participating in one of these, please contact Ruan Uys directly on ruan.uys@bgf.org.au or call (02) 9287 1112.

SAFESCRIPT NSW

After trial periods on the Central Coast and Hunter-New England Local Health District areas, SafeScript NSW will begin in May 2022. SafeScript NSW gives prescribers (doctors, nurse practitioners and dentists) and pharmacists real-time information about your prescribing and dispensing history for certain high-risk medicines such as opioids, benzodiazepines and some other mental health medications.

People who are taking high doses of opioids, people who take two or more medicines that have the potential to become harmful when combined, or those who have visited multiple prescribers and pharmacies within a short period of time will be impacted by SafeScript NSW. For more information about SafeScript NSW visit the website at www.safescript.health.nsw.gov.au/consumers/about-safescript-nsw.

NUAA's PeerLine offers a confidential peer-run telephone service providing support to people who use drugs, are on the opioid treatment program or are seeking treatment on 1800 644 413. If you want to speak to a peer with lived experience of HIV and drug use about SafeScript NSW, you can also call Andrew Heslop at Positive Life NSW on (02) 9206 2177, 1800 245 677 or email contact@positivelife.org.au.



STRAIGHT AND HIV+?

- Get the latest information on topics such as pregnancy, treatment and living well
- Find out about other useful services
- Connect with other heterosexual people living with HIV

WEBSITE

pozhet.org.au

EMAIL

pozhet@pozhet.org.au

FACEBOOK

[@pozhet](https://www.facebook.com/pozhet)

Pozhet is a government-funded NSW-wide service for heterosexual people at risk of or living with HIV, their partners and family.



IN MY OWN WORDS

PAUL MAUDLIN



Paul Maudlin



Unknown

My name is Paul Maudlin and on December 1st 1994 it was International World AIDS Day and also the official launch day for the then PLWHA (NSW) Positive Speakers Bureau (PSB) in Paddington. On that day I was in the NSW central west town of Tullamore, doing the first of what was to become hundreds of speaking engagements for the PSB across NSW over the next ten years.

For almost three years, several Project Officers were employed in part-time capacities to manage the PSB until I joined the organisation in June 1997. Initially I was also employed part-time for two months until August 1997, when I then became the first person to assume a full-time position with PLWHA (NSW) in this role, after suitable funding was secured. I remained in the position until the organisation's restructure on January 2004, which eventually became Positive Life NSW in 2008.

After my redundancy I relocated to the NSW Central Coast to take up a Sexual Health administration position for the HIV and Related Programs Unit in Gosford, where I have recently retired after seventeen years' service. However, that's not the complete story. During this time I was also involved in HIV/Sexual Health support, promotion, advocacy and community development for a local HIV Non-Government Organisation (NGO) and I also found time to teach community service courses for TAFE NSW.

After a seventeen-year absence from Talkabout, I have been invited to write about my 28-year journey as person living with HIV and I will be writing in the next six editions during 2022. I hope you will enjoy reading about my lived experiences, maybe have a laugh or cry, but more importantly gain some inspiration from these as I did 'back-in-the-day' from work colleagues, friends and clients that I met along the way when working for these wonderful organisations. ■

“After a seventeen-year absence from Talkabout, I have been invited to write about my 28-year journey”

1993 Part 1: Coming out, disclosure and a terminal event

It was Friday 14th January 1993, seven months after separating from my wife of thirteen years and our two children. I ventured into Darlinghurst after work and visited one of my favourite gay haunts, Kings Steam Sauna in Oxford Street. I hadn't been there very long when I met Steve sitting, smiling widely beckoning me to enter his cubicle. Before too long Steve wanted us to leave the sauna and go back to his unit in North Sydney. I was eager for more adventure with Steve who like myself was married and separated and likewise had two children of similar gender and ages.

Steve and I also had similar careers, he was a Sergeant in the Australian Regular Army and I had been Chief Petty Officer in the Royal Australian Navy having completed my 20-year engagement in late 1990. I stayed the night and couldn't wait to return again and so a further visit was planned for the following Wednesday. It was on our second encounter (Wednesday) that Steve disclosed that he had AIDS and wanted to be honest and upfront with me as he felt a very deep attraction for me. I likewise had the same feelings and told him that I wanted to be with him no matter how long that might be. I stayed the night again and subsequently many more nights over the next eight months, until Steve became too ill to remain at home after several hospital admissions. Steve was very close to his family, including his wife who he never had the opportunity to divorce and his two children who adored him.

Before Steve's health started to decline, we had many good times together, enjoying each other's company immensely with him telling me it was the happiest he'd been for many years. I concurred with this totally and because of this came out as a gay man at the age of 38, after Steve encouraged me to do so. I attended a

Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service (GLCS) Men's Coming out Group on Saturday afternoons for a couple of months.

In 1987 when I was serving onboard HMAS Torrens, I took a mandatory HIV test prior to the ship's departure for its three-month deployment to the Far East. I had my second HIV test at Sydney Sexual Health Clinic (SSHC) in May 1993, the day after returning from a short holiday in Vanuatu with Steve. I returned a week later to SSHC and was advised that my HIV result was negative and I needed to return again in three months for follow-up testing. I had what was possibly a seroconversion illness in July and returned as advised for further testing in August 1993. I was given a positive diagnosis on the 12th August 1993 and told that with treatment I could live for possibly 10 years. Ironically on the way to visit Steve at St. Vincent's that evening I was almost wiped out by an oncoming car in Kings Cross.

I couldn't get in to see my doctor at SSHC for my results until 6.30pm and was there a couple of hours while I had further bloods taken (I almost fainted, due to not eating all day) as well as having post diagnosis counselling. I wasn't quite with it afterwards thinking about my diagnosis and whether to tell Steve about it. He was aware I was getting results that day. Despite all of this I needed to see Steve and it was quite late by the time I arrived at the hospital and Steve was asleep.

Despite being very unwell, Steve maintained his sense of humour and mentally was on top of his game. I agonised whether to disclose my seroconversion to Steve, thinking that it was unfair to burden him with such information. The next day after discussing the situation with my counsellor who agreed I should tell him. However, before doing so I also took the extra step of consulting with Steve's counsellor who sympathised

with me and told me 'He could handle the news.'

By the time I found him in his newly assigned private room in Ward 17S, his parents were visiting, another delay. Once they'd departed, I told Steve what my result was and initially he closed his eyes staying like that for a few minutes. I tried to touch his hand to reassure him that I was accepting of the diagnosis. At first, he didn't want to talk about it, preferring to sit in silence when once again we were interrupted by a nurse coming into his room to change an intravenous line and feeding bag.

Finally, the next day we got to continue our conversation from the previous day and we both ended up in tears. Steve said

“I hope you are able to find somebody who will love you the way you love me. I hope that person will also be supportive of you as you've been to me. You've got lots of good friends now and you will be alright, you will find somebody.”

Steve went on to apologise for me becoming positive. I responded by telling him that I didn't want to hear that, as he had nothing to be sorry about, not to me. I then said

“We are both in this relationship together and we accepted the risks.”

1993 Part 1: Coming out, disclosure and a terminal event

Steve died peacefully in his sleep at 9:30am on the 12th September 1993, a month after my diagnosis and fourteen and a half hours short of his 35th birthday while I was on my way to visit him. I arrived at 10:00am to find his sister, brother-in-law and parents outside his room looking very distressed. His Dad simply said “Paul, he’s gone.”

I entered the room with Steve’s sister and together we said our good byes, cuddled each other as the tears were streaming down our faces. I was permitted to stay a while longer with Steve before re-joining the family across the road from St. Vincent’s at the Bandstand Café where we talked about the previous week’s events and how Steve had been visibly declining



after being taken off fluids and no longer able to talk, but managed to otherwise communicate with his facial movements, arms and hands.

Yet despite all of this, there was an awful lot of love surrounding Steve as myself, his family and friends came and went that week. While the family and I were at the Bandstand Café that morning, one of Steve’s nurses dressed him in his favourite clothes exactly as he had requested. We returned for the very last time to see him very smartly dressed in black trousers, Tarocash shirt (he loved Tarocash clothing) and his black Army boots which were shined to perfection. I stayed just a bit longer and then left him for the very last time.

Steve had a beautiful funeral service at Parramatta All Saints Church. On the way into the church, I met Steve’s wife for the first time after his two children said hello to me (I had met his children several times beforehand). She introduced herself and was very pleasant with me, already knowing who I was. We exchanged a few kind words with each other while both trying to suppress tears.

The funeral party was organised by the Army with six of Steve’s closest Army mates, three of whom I had met previously. The minister conducting the ceremony had known Steve for 22 years since their high school days and they had also served together in the Army.

Steve wanted the Wendy Matthews song ‘The day he went away’ played inside the church. This was not permitted and instead as Steve’s coffin was being carried out the tune of the ‘Dam Busters’ was allowed to be played. It was very touching.

The second part of the funeral was a private affair held at the Northern Suburbs Crematorium and attended by myself and several of my friends who had come to know Steve during our nine months together, his family and some other close friends. This time his requested song was played – Amy Grant’s ‘I will remember you.’

In the months that followed Steve’s passing I wanted to get my life better organised and concentrate on my work as well as my physical and mental health. From the outset in 1993, I was determined that HIV would not dominate or control my life, however for a range of very complicated reasons that’s exactly what HIV/AIDS did do for the next 14 years despite all of my best intentions otherwise.

I have learnt a hell of a lot about myself and others living with HIV/AIDS since then. For me, life with a ‘chronic medical condition’ such as HIV for such a long time, has certainly been very eventful with many obstacles on so many levels. I am alive and well despite surviving many challenges and feel very privileged to share my experiences with all of you.

In the next edition I will write Part 2: 1993 and the period 1994/98 and how it took me almost a year after Steve’s passing to disclose my HIV status to close friends, work colleagues and family. I will also cover the diversity of medical and lifestyle/social support activities I got involved in. These included volunteer work, HIV medical research, studies and drug trials, men’s peer support facilitation, struggles with viral resistance and treatments coupled with AIDS defining illnesses and of course the PSB Project. ■

– Paul R Maudlin OAM, JP

FOR MORE DETAILS

Call (02) 9206 2177 or 1800 245 677 or email contact@positivelife.org.au

Subscribe by email to get our regular updates about all the latest on events, forums, activities, and other ways to participate in Positive Life NSW. Event details are correct at time of publishing.

**PULL OUT
FOR THE FRIDGE!**

FEBRUARY

DATE	TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
17	6pm to 8.30pm	Peer2Peer For all gay and bisexual men living with HIV	Sydney
20	From 10am	Fairday - public event Visit the Positive Life stall this 2022 Fairday, grab a showbag, and relax in the 'Poz Lounge'.	Sydney

MARCH

DATE	TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
01	6.30pm to 8pm	For Women A monthly online moderated discussion forum for women living with HIV over 40 years of age	Online
05	2pm (group meet) 6-9pm	Mardi Gras Parade - public event Be on the lookout for Positive Life's entry led by the splendid Vanessa Wagner	Sydney
09	2pm	National Day of Women living with HIV	Sydney
15	6pm to 7.30pm	Peers Connect Online! A monthly online moderated discussion forum for anyone living with HIV in NSW, over 18 years of age	Online
16	12.30pm	Digital Mentors A peer-based workshop supporting all people living with HIV to build your skills and confidence using computers, mobile devices and the internet.	Sydney & Online
17	7pm	[+Connect] An inclusive social event for all people living with HIV, our partners, family and friends to get together.	Sydney
24	12.30 to 2.30pm	Peer2Peer (Karumah) For all gay and bisexual men living with HIV	Newcastle
28-31	TBA	Regional visit For all people living with HIV	Western NSW & Nepean Blue Mountains

APRIL

DATE	TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
05	6pm to 7.30pm	Peers Connect Online! A monthly online moderated discussion forum for anyone living with HIV in NSW, over 18 years of age	Online
12	6.30pm to 8pm	The Women's Room A monthly online moderated discussion forum for young women living with HIV	Online
13	6pm to 9pm	In The Know A 'Treatments and Research' information forum	Sydney
20	12.30pm	Digital Mentors A peer-based workshop supporting all people living with HIV to build your skills and confidence using computers, mobile devices and the internet.	Sydney & Online
21	6pm to 8.30pm	Peer2Peer For all gay and bisexual men living with HIV	Sydney

Do you go to or host regular or one-off events, for people living with HIV in NSW?
Send your event details to contact@positivelife.org.au to get your event listed in Talkabout.

“
Some ways to get active with Positive Life and participate in the NSW Body Positive.

SHARE YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS

You're invited to share your distinctive, print ready photographs that the whole community can enjoy, for inclusion in a Talkabout edition. Photographs must be interesting, varied, unique and G-rated.

Please only submit photos that you own the rights to. Ensure your full name is included at the beginning of the filename in the form: CameronSmith.jpg. Please include your name, phone number and email for verification; and indicate how you wish to be credited for the photograph if published in Talkabout. Image file types accepted are JPEG, PNG or PSD. Please do not include any borders or watermarks. Due to privacy, we'd prefer that any photographs that include individuals in a public space are unidentifiable.

Please include a short statement about the photograph such as optional brief description or caption (40 words max), location, written permission to use your photo. Sending Positive Life your photograph(s) means you grant Positive Life a non-exclusive license to use the photograph in its submitted form, subject to re-sizing to fit the magazine format, for publication in Talkabout and on the Positive Life NSW website and social media in perpetuity.

Submissions must be limited to 10 photographs or less to be considered. Maximum photo size accepted is 1.5MB (larger files will be deleted), submissions over 1MB must be transferred using a file transfer service such as wetransfer.com

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Your messages, comments, thoughts and opinions are welcome. Letters should be short (less than 200 words) and may be edited for space. To be considered for publication, please include your name, street address and phone number for verification. Personal details will be withheld from publication unless you indicate otherwise in writing.

Email editor@positivelife.org.au or write to Talkabout, PO Box 831, Darlinghurst NSW 1300

PARTICIPATE

Be part of the 2022 Checking In with You Consultation! Now that we're into a third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, Positive Life recognises the intersection of isolation, social distancing, loss of familiar routines for all sections of our community with ongoing impacts to employment, social networks, and personal wellbeing.

The survey is an opportunity

- for community members to relay their concerns, fears and thoughts to Positive Life as their representative peer body, as well as
- for Positive Life to identify and document the issues of importance to our community members.

The survey will inform the Positive Life Board from a governance perspective, guide staff who engage on a daily basis with community members and offer insights into the lived experience of HIV at this time through a Community Consultation Forum and Community Report published and shared with community.

The survey will be open until Friday 4 March. A printed copy, along with a Reply Paid envelope accompanies this Talkabout.

SHARE YOUR STORY

It can be super easy to feel as if you are the only person dealing with a particular issue, facing a difficult decision or a new situation, while living with HIV. Talkabout's greatest strength is the voices of the people living with HIV who contribute their stories of success and hardship, love and loss, joy and sadness, courage and fear that really make a difference!

Stories and/or articles that are published in Talkabout will receive a \$30 Woolworths eGift Card Voucher. This will be redeemable at a number of other participating outlets. You can write under your own name, a pen-name or anonymously. It's up to you!

If you have a story and no time to write, contact us and we'll interview and write up your story for 'In My Own Words' with your approval. Get in touch! Email contact@positivelife.org.au or call (02) 9206 2177 or 1800 245 677

POS LIFE IN YOUR AREA?*

In 2022, Positive Life is planning to travel to the following regional and rural areas as we return to our usual engagement in partnership with NSW Local Health District HARP Units, NSW Sexual Health Services and state-wide Services to run a minimum of four rural outreach sessions per year to meet with people living with HIV throughout NSW.

This will be an opportunity to meet with a peer (someone else living with HIV) to discuss the latest HIV information, and to talk about your needs and experiences living in your regional or rural area.

If you live in these areas or would like to meet when we're in your region, please register with us as soon as you can. This will ensure you receive all the details about the location and times closer to the relevant dates, as well as any updates.

NEPEAN BLUE MOUNTAINS

28 - 31 MARCH 2022

WESTERN NSW

28 - 31 MARCH 2022

MID NORTH COAST

27-30 JUNE 2022

NORTHERN NSW

27-30 JUNE 2022

HUNTER NEW ENGLAND

23-26 MAY 2022

CENTRAL COAST

23-26 MAY 2022

SOUTHERN NSW

26-29 SEPTEMBER 2022

MURRUMBIDGEE REGION

26-29 SEPTEMBER 2022

Please call to register with either Andrew Heslop or Craig Andrews on (02) 9206 2177 or freecall 1800 245 677 or email contact@positivelife.org.au

* pending covid restrictions or other unforeseen changes

INTRODUCING ANDREW HESLOP:

“Andrew Heslop is the Senior Health Promotion and Peer Navigation Manager at Positive Life NSW. This relatively new role incorporates Treatments, Peer Navigation and Health Promotion and community support is at the heart.

“The job is all about treatments information, peer support and decision making that meet the emerging health and well-being needs of people living with and affected by HIV in NSW,” Andrew says.

“Positive Life NSW’s range of programs for all people living with HIV regardless of gender or sexual orientation includes social inclusion, health promotion, peer support, equitable access to care, and more. At the end of the day, it’s all about community connecting with community and doing what we can to support your quality of life,” he says.

In March 2022, Andrew will be in *Western NSW and Nepean/Blue Mountains*, on the first of four regional visits. These visits offer community members in these regions a chance to sit down and talk with someone else living with HIV, and share what it’s like living with HIV in regional and rural areas of NSW.

It’s also an opportunity to talk about issues of managing health care in the regions, getting prescriptions, social isolation and socialising, privacy, confidentiality, more.

“People living in regional areas have been left behind, in decision making, in having their health needs met, in getting health information,” he says. “It’s been very difficult to get to the regional centres in the past two years, because of COVID.”

“Now, we want to engage with community to provide education and support. All of this has as its core element the needs and wellbeing and quality of life of the NSW Body Positive.”

After five years with NUAA (the NSW Users and AIDS Association), where his role included blood borne virus (BBV) Peer Outreach Lead, Andrew is excited to explore his rural and



regional contacts to benefit all people living with HIV across NSW.

Andrew is hoping that as many people as possible take advantage of the regional meetings. “We understand that you might be travelling some distance to meet with us. You can get in touch through your regional Sexual Health Clinics or wherever you get your meds and bloods done, or give us a call here in the office on (02) 9206 2177 or 1800 245 677 or email contact@positivelife.org.au”

The full list of regional meetings is on page 15 in this issue of Talkabout. More detail about the regional visits is on the Positive Life NSW website at www.positivelife.org.au/services/regional-and-rural/ ■

In The Know - a Treatments and Research Forum

Wednesday 13 April 2022

SYDNEY VENUE TO BE CONFIRMED

“What’s in the medication pipeline for
all people living with HIV?”

“What are the new options for women living with HIV?”

“How will the HIV injectables improve life
for people living with HIV?”





From a financial perspective, the beginning of a new year in Australia is less important than the first of July, our financial new year. I'd save the big financial changes for then. This January/February, I only want to discuss the one thing that could make a real difference to your positive money practice.

Stop using a single account for income, bills and spending money.

Why is it so bad?

It means you have to THINK each time you spend. Have I set enough aside? Are my bills going to be paid? Did I miss anything? Have I overspent? So much extra brain work!

Start by having a second account for all your income and predictable bills (I use three accounts and I name them **Spending, Billing** and **Income**). This should NOT HAVE A DEBIT CARD attached. Your bank can advise you on the account and a lot of banks will allow you to create an extra account online or through the app. You could even do it at another bank to make sure you don't look at it every day!

Once you have your income going into this account make sure you download the bank app and automate all your payments. To automate payments, you can set up recurring or scheduled payments that happen every week/two weeks/month etc. That way the system runs itself.

Set up a recurring payment from your Income/Billing account to transfer a **weekly spending amount** into your Spending account with a Debit Card attached. It's up to you to decide how much you can afford but make sure it is done **weekly**. I do this on a Friday. This way, I always know how much I can spend until the next Friday! For most people this is around \$200 to \$250 per week. You could start with a lower amount and adjust it if your Income/Billing account starts to grow.

That way when you look at your Banking App you know how much you may spend that week without having to think. Sometimes I use it as an excuse to get out of an expensive social engagement that I know is going to put me into debt!

Best part? You wake up on a Friday morning and your spending money is ready to go, all you've got to do is make it stretch a week.

Get free advice and talk with someone who is non-judgemental, confidential and independent to help you break the cycle of financial stress by calling (02) 9283 8666 or email us at fc@bgf.org.au.

We will try to respond personally and if not, will include ideas in future Talkabouts. ■

Barry French and Emma Reid, Bobby Goldsmith
Foundation (BGF) Financial Counsellors.



Supporting people living with HIV aged over 45, through the maze of aged care, disability, and healthcare services in NSW

Contact Positive Life NSW on (02) 9206 2177 or 1800 245 677 (freecall)
www.positivelife.org.au peernav@positivelife.org.au



If you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person and live with HIV, you're invited to have a yarn with Michelle Tobin, the Positive Life Aboriginal Health Program Officer about what makes a culturally-safe model to support Indigenous people across NSW on telephone (02) 9206 2177, 1800 245 677 (freecall) or email contact@positivelife.org.au



Thanks to today's HIV antiretroviral therapy, more than 50% of people living with HIV in NSW are over 50 years of age. Ageing brings many new challenges associated with health, justice and human rights. These include questions of planning for the future, rights around prevention of abuse or exploitation, or impacts of changing familial or marital status, age-related cognitive impairments, financial status and other living arrangements.

Throughout 2022, Talkabout will run a series of practical, informative short editorials from the Seniors Rights Service, which offers all seniors across NSW free and confidential telephone advice, aged care advocacy and support, legal advice and rights-based education forums to seniors across regional, rural and remote areas of NSW. The staff listen and care, working in partnership with Seniors confidentially and collaboratively using cultural sensitivity to build rapport offering holistic legal and advocacy assistance in a way that recognises the unique needs of all Seniors.

Their aged care advocate team support and assist older people who receive Commonwealth-funded aged care services at home or in residential care, as well as their carers or family members. Non-legal education sessions are regularly scheduled to listen, clarify your issues, provide information, inform you of your rights, identify possible outcomes, help you advocate for yourself and, if requested, speak up for you.

Their legal team provides legal advice to older people, addressing issues of discrimination, abuse (physical, financial, psychological), wills, power of attorney, guardianship, consumer rights, debt management, unfair contracts, tenancy matters, accommodation and residential facilities, family law, domestic violence, and administrative law.

Their First Nations Solicitor offers legal advice, maintaining cultural and spiritual continuity across regional, rural or remote areas. A proud Kamilaroi man with family ties to the Gubbi Gubbi Nation, he visits and reaches out across regional, rural and remote areas of NSW on a weekly basis using a friendly, non-judgmental narrative approach, through traditional storytelling, or 'yarning.' Seniors Rights mentor solicitors to empower the Aboriginal community with the knowledge, understanding and trust that there is justice available to them within the legal system, by building trust with local Aboriginal Communities in a culturally safe and sensitive manner.

The Seniors Rights Service staff regularly schedule rights-based education sessions across NSW for older people, their families and carers, and aged care services. If you're over 50 years of age and need some free and confidential telephone advice or support to advocate around your legal rights, call Seniors Rights Service on (02) 9281 3600 or 1800 424 079 or email info@seniorsrightsservice.org.au. ■

SENIORS RIGHTS

LIVING WITH HIV?

We have your questions covered

- Do I need to tell my work of my diagnosis?
- What happens if I'm not an Australian resident?
- Can I have a baby?
- Can I travel overseas?
- ...

Visit us

MHAHS.ORG.AU

Find out what you need to know



@TheMHAHS



(02) 9515 1234





Due to the ongoing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the fact that there are still many Australians who have not been able to return home, I thought it would be useful to clarify the rules around taking HIV antiretroviral medication that is subsidised by the Australian Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) overseas, and also shipping/posting PBS-subsidised medication to clients, friends or family members who are overseas.

Living with HIV and stuck overseas

Current Federal legislation allows people who are travelling overseas to take PBS-subsidised medication only for themselves or someone they are travelling with. Australian legislation prohibits taking PBS-subsidised medication overseas for anyone else, including family members or relatives who may already be overseas, or travelling at a later date. The same legislation also prohibits the shipping or posting of PBS-subsidised medication overseas. If you are caught, you risk a fine of up to \$11,000 and/or two years in prison.

The pharmaceutical advisor at the PBS has confirmed that while they do empathise with the situation, there were no concessions or amendments to the legislation for Australian patients who were unable to return to Australia. In fact, they increased the fine from \$5000 to \$11,000 in August 2021.

So, what are the options available for Australian residents overseas?

1. Seek medical advice in the country you are visiting.

Australia has reciprocal health care agreements with various countries around the world that may cover the cost of medical care. These countries include New Zealand, UK, Ireland, Belgium, Finland, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, and Sweden. The exact agreements do vary from country to country, and this can be checked on the Services Australia website at www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/reciprocal-health-care-agreements.

There are also sexual health and HIV services available in some countries which do not charge for the service they provide. Again this varies from country to country and may include the provision of medication.

Reaching out to local HIV support organisations in the country you are in may also offer some guidance.

It is worth noting that while Australia has access to the vast majority of HIV antiretroviral treatments, the medication that you are taking may not be available in another country, so you may need to liaise with your prescriber.

It is also important to check with your health or travel insurance to see if they will cover the cost of medical appointments and prescription medication. Some insurance companies still have exclusions, including for HIV.

2. Obtain a private prescription from your usual prescriber in Australia, have the medication dispensed and then sent or couriered to you.

While it is illegal to post PBS-subsidised medication overseas, it is also illegal for a doctor to write a PBS prescription or for a pharmacist to dispense PBS medications for you, if they know you are overseas. However, your doctor can prescribe, and your pharmacist can dispense private prescriptions which are not PBS-subsidised. This can be an expensive option. Without the Government subsidy, most HIV antiretroviral medication becomes very expensive, approx. AUS\$700 - \$1000/month for most single tablet regimens.

3. Obtain a private prescription from your usual prescriber in Australia, and order from an online pharmacy. Some reliable examples include the following: www.greencrosspharmacy.online/hiv-treatment-arvs, www.alldaychemist.com and unitedpharmacies.com. Again note, you may not be able to find your exact regimen, so you may need to liaise with your prescriber.

If you are planning on travelling overseas:

1. Check whether the country you are travelling to has any restrictions on people living with HIV. Helpful regularly updated websites include www.hivtravel.org and travelrestrictions.unaids.org/. Some countries do restrict entry if they are aware of your HIV status. This can be for entry itself, for short term stays, or for long term stays if you are wishing to reside and work.

2. Ensure you take enough medication. This needs to include the time you plan to be overseas, but also extra in case there are delays returning home. This has been

particularly relevant and difficult during the COVID pandemic. For short trips (under four weeks), I normally recommend taking twice the amount that you require and if possible, splitting it between two bags in case of loss or damage. Taking your medication on board with you is safer, as checked baggage can be lost or delayed. For longer trips (over four weeks), I usually recommend only taking an extra month or so. If you take excessive quantities, customs and immigration officials may consider that evidence of an intention to overstay your permitted entry.

3. Keep the medication in its original packaging and ensure it is labelled with your name.

4. Have a copy of all prescriptions and a letter from your doctor stating that the medication is for your personal use to treat a medical condition(s). This letter does not need to specify HIV.

5. Research various travel insurance companies before you travel to see if they charge extra for people living with HIV, or if they have exclusions.

While living with HIV should not stop you travelling and enjoying overseas adventures, it is important to carefully research and plan your trip to avoid travel-related problems. The COVID pandemic has unfortunately added extra challenges which need to be taken into consideration.

For the latest guidance on travel, check out www.smartraveller.gov.au. ■

– Bruce Hamish Bowden
Clinical Pharmacist (HIV)



Have questions about HIV treatments?
Need to talk about your HIV and health?
Contact Positive Life
02 9206 2177 or 1800 245 677 (freecall)

Positive Life NSW

**WE
RISE**
and
defeat
HIV



WE
RISE

WE
RISE
against
HIV

Positive Living
The voice of all people

WOMEN'S SPACE

Welcome to Women's Space. This is a space focused on all women living with HIV, as a space to get connected, be informed and to share our stories.

Women living with HIV are a diverse bunch. We come from different backgrounds and lifestyles and have many roles and responsibilities. We are career women, mothers, employees, spouses, sportswomen, friends, pet owners, neighbours and so much more. Women living with HIV can lead very different lives and yet there are many similarities in the experiences and challenges that we face living with HIV.

Some women find it beneficial to get involved with HIV organisations. For example, if you are a creative type, you have the opportunity to send in a piece of artwork to Positive Life NSW that may be showcased on the cover of the June edition of the Talkabout magazine. Please contact Positive Life for more details by phone (02) 9206 2177, 1800 245 677 (freecall) or email contact@positivelife.org.au.

It can be great to build connections with other people living with HIV as you can get to know people who understand you and may even make lifelong friends. There are a range of peer groups both online and in person through Positive Life that may interest you. The groups specifically for women are **The Women's Room** (for young women living with HIV) and **For Women** (for women living with HIV over 40 years of age).

The upcoming annual **National Day of Women Living with HIV on 9 March 2022** is another great way to connect with others and to celebrate all women living with HIV. There is a high tea being held in the Sydney area, which is always an elegant occasion. Our theme this year will be 'Living Well: Beyond Stigma' where speakers will talk on relevant topics and there will be time to chat with other women.

If you cannot attend or live outside of the Sydney area, you might like to organise a morning tea of your own with your friends and family to celebrate the day. Women's Health organisations, agencies and groups may be encouraged to hold a morning or afternoon tea to show support for women living with HIV. If there is not one being held in your area, maybe approach them about holding one.

Watch this Women's Space for more ways for women living with HIV to be informed, get connected and share our unique experiences and viewpoints.

For more details on any of the events or groups in the Women's Space, get in touch with Positive Life NSW by phone (02) 9206 2177, 1800 245 677 (freecall) or email contact@positivelife.org.au to speak to another woman living with HIV. ■





Currently one in 10 of us in Australia is vegetarian. One in seven of us is thinking about becoming vegetarian in the future. One of the predicted top 10 food trends in 2022 is eating more plant foods. Chances are you might be vegetarian or considering reducing how much meat you eat.

The big question...is being vegetarian healthy for YOU?

Yes absolutely, BUT...

Being a healthy vegetarian, involves more than just cutting out meat and eating more plant foods. One of your first questions might be, how 'vego' are you planning to go? Reasons for choosing a vegetarian diet vary and include religious requirements, environmental concerns, to improve health or financial.

While a vegetarian diet excludes all animals including seafood, you might be aiming for a 'flexitarian' diet (meat, chicken and fish four times a week or less) or a reductarian diet (reducing red meat in your diet). Or do you want to be a 'vegan' (someone who eats absolutely nothing derived from animals or from animal products)? Will you adopt an ovo-vegetarian diet (avoid animals or animal products, but include eggs) or a lacto-vegetarian (include dairy products such as milk, cheese, yogurt, etc)? You might be thinking of opting for a pescatarian diet instead (excludes animal meats or products with the exception of seafood such as fish, prawns, crabs and lobster).

The reality is, the more restrictive you become with animal foods, the more important it is to plan your diet. This is to be sure you get all the nutrients you need. The main nutrients of concern in becoming a vegetarian are proteins (found in meat, chicken and other poultry, seafood, eggs, dairy (yoghurt, milk, cheese), nuts, seeds, legumes, soy foods (e.g. tofu, tempeh, soy milk, soy yoghurt), textured vegetable protein (TVP), tofu and tempeh), calcium, iron, zinc, iodine, omega-3 fats and vitamin B12.

The health benefits of a plant-based diet includes improved heart health, lower blood pressure and less harmful cholesterol. Another major benefit is as a preventative against type 2 diabetes and obesity. A plant-based diet is also associated with a lower risk for cancer. Note the emphasis on a healthy plant-based diet! It is possible to eat vegetarian and still make unhealthy choices.

If you're planning to modify or change your diet to either become vegetarian or simply reduce your intake of red meat, it's important you speak with a dietitian to make the most sustainable and beneficial decisions, particularly in terms of maintaining or improving your lifelong good health.

To get a personalised appointment about your diet contact us through at The Albion Centre on (02) 9332 9600. We're offering telehealth (video and phone) appointments. ■

– The Albion Centre nutrition team

UNUSUAL RISKS

Life insurance is for people with a lot of living to do. Getting your life insurances sorted when you're living with a medical condition can be both difficult and sometimes feel, frankly, downright uncomfortable.

Disclosing an HIV status or a diabetes diagnosis to a stranger, without knowing whether you're going to have to be the constant educator to yet another uninformed person, can be tiring.

Not knowing whether you're going to face HIV stigma and discrimination, or a response based in homophobia, bi- or trans-phobia is still just another reason why many people living with HIV or others from culturally diverse backgrounds or sexualities miss out on getting what every Australian takes for granted: the ability to get a life insurance or income protection policy in place, when they want to.

Getting your life insurances sorted is an important financial decision that can quickly find itself in the too-hard-basket, for good reason. The broad range of health and medical questions that are standard for all life insurance applications means many people hold valid concerns about facing stigma, discrimination and intolerance from strangers with preconceived ideas.

Applying for life insurance is particularly sensitive if you're living with a manageable health condition or if you live with a gender or sexuality outside the mainstream.

As a result, many important financial decisions end up left in the too-hard-basket while we live smaller lives and just try to manage the increased anxiety of living life without a safety net.

The good news is now there's an online financial advice service specialising in helping Australians living with HIV or others taking PrEP, people diagnosed with diabetes, or those using IVF and surrogacy options to grow their family. This financial advice service is called **Unusual Risks Insured**, and you can find them online at www.unusualrisks.com.au

The team behind [unusualrisks.com.au](http://www.unusualrisks.com.au) decided long ago to be the difference they wanted to see in their profession, to celebrate and support the huge range of life challenges and diverse human experiences. For them it's about advice equality.

"Many financial problems facing minority communities are still incredibly grey, and the stigma of difference is still a barrier for many people who still need financial advice".

The team behind Unusual Risks Insured have been working in Australian Financial Services for 20+ years, quietly serving people living with HIV or other complex health needs; people living in regional or remote communities with high privacy needs, or folks who simply want to support a diverse and inclusive professional



services business.

“Providing a confidential online service means we never ask a client to talk about us, leave product or service reviews or tell their friends or family. Add to that, online search engines routinely reject our advertising about financial advice for people living with HIV, so you can see why many people still don’t know we exist, and what we can do for them.”

Whether you prefer to do your own online research first, have an email conversation about a sensitive question, or you prefer to jump the queue and book a time to have a chat with a real person, you can start your conversation at www.unusualrisks.com.au/contact or call 1300 137 403 and ask to speak with Drew Browne. ■

halc

The HIV AIDS Legal Centre

The HIV/AIDS Legal Centre is a not-for-profit, specialist community legal centre, and the only one of its kind in Australia.

We provide free and comprehensive legal assistance (within operational guidelines) to people in NSW with HIV or hepatitis related legal matters. This includes in such areas of law as: discrimination, privacy, immigration, end of life planning, insurance, superannuation, social security, criminal, family, housing and more.

For confidential legal assistance please contact us: Phone 02 9206 2060 or email halc@halc.org.au

Wednesday 9 March 2022

National Day of Women Living with HIV

#NDWLHIV

Positive Life NSW invites you and a guest to attend an Afternoon High Tea in Sydney City to celebrate the lives of all women living with HIV (WLHIV).

Relax with friends and supporters in a mixed social environment over a classic range of sweet and savoury treats, coffee and a range of tea selections.

Places limited to 50 guests
RSVP early!

Date: Wednesday 9 March 2022

Time: 2pm

Place: Sydney City Hotel

RSVP Essential: (02) 9206-2177 or
1800 245 677 (freecall) or email

contact@positivelife.org.au

by 5pm Wednesday 2 March 2022

Please advise dietary restrictions (gluten-free, vegetarian or vegan) on RSVP.



**Providing services and community
for PLHIV and their supporters in
Newcastle and the Hunter Valley**

Call 0411 060 154 or 4940 8393
Email admin@karumah.org.au
Visit karumah.org.au

KARUMAH

Enriching the lives of People Living with
HIV in the Hunter-New England region



The voice of all people living with HIV

Positive Speakers Bureau

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HIV Health Promotion

Advocacy + Policy

Peer Navigation + Support

Talkabout Magazine

Housing Support

a[STARTx]

Ageing Support

Treatments Information + Support

Social Support

Aboriginal Health Program

Positive Life NSW works to promote a positive image of people living with and affected by HIV with the aim of eliminating prejudice, isolation, stigma and discrimination. We provide information, targeted referrals and advocate to change systems and practices that discriminate against all people living with HIV, our partners, friends, family and carers in NSW.

Phone 02 9206 2177 **Freecall** 1800 245 677
www.positivelife.org.au **contact@positivelife.org.au**
