

# HOT QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2023



## 1 December 2023

World AIDS Day, observed on December 1st annually, serves as a reminder of the global fight against HIV/AIDS. This day raises awareness, commemorates those we've lost, and supports those living with the virus. It's a pivotal moment to unite in solidarity, erase stigma, and emphasise prevention, education, and access to treatment. Since its inception in 1988, significant progress has been made in understanding, treating, and preventing HIV. Yet, challenges persist, particularly in vulnerable communities and regions. Celebrating progress while acknowledging the journey ahead, World AIDS Day stands as a beacon of hope, advocating for a world free of discrimination and, ultimately, free of HIV/AIDS.

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**The HIV  
Outreach Team  
can support  
people living with  
HIV, confidentially  
and free of  
charge, to  
improve their  
independence,  
quality of life and  
wellbeing**



### **Loving someone when you're living with**

**HIV** can pose unique challenges, but it's absolutely possible to have a fulfilling and loving relationship. The first step is self-acceptance and understanding that your diagnosis doesn't define your capacity to love or be loved. Communication is key in any relationship, especially when navigating a situation like this. Being open and honest about your HIV status with your partner is crucial. It's important for both of you to understand the implications, dispel myths, and discuss how to move forward together.

Medical advancements have transformed HIV into a manageable condition. With proper treatment, the virus can be suppressed to undetectable levels, greatly reducing the risk of transmission.

#### ***Undetectable = Untransmissible***

Additionally, there are preventive measures like PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) that can be used by the negative partner to further minimise risks.

Emotional support and understanding from your partner are essential. It's vital to find someone who sees beyond your diagnosis, values you for who you are, and supports you unconditionally. Love flourishes with trust, respect, and shared experiences, and having HIV shouldn't deter you from experiencing a deep, meaningful relationship. Seeking support from counsellors, support groups, or online communities can also provide valuable guidance and understanding. Remember, with love, care, and responsible health practices, a fulfilling relationship is entirely feasible regardless of HIV status.

**The Queer Progress Flag** is a symbol representing the diverse spectrum within the LGBTQ+ community, aiming to include marginalised identities often overlooked in mainstream LGBTQ+ representations. This variant of the Pride Flag, designed by Daniel Quasar in 2018, incorporates elements from various flags to emphasise inclusivity. The flag features the original rainbow colors along with stripes representing marginalised groups: black and brown for marginalised people of colour communities, light blue, pink, and white for the Trans community, and pink, white, and light blue for those who identify as non-binary. It serves as a powerful reminder of the ongoing quest for inclusivity and progress within the LGBTQ+ movement.





## Understanding HIV-Associated Neurological Disorders in Australia

### Disclosing your HIV

**status** in Australia is a personal decision with legal, social, and emotional implications. Australian law generally doesn't mandate disclosure, except in specific circumstances such as sexual activity where there's a risk of transmission. While sharing your status is not obligatory, openness can foster trust in relationships and is vital in healthcare. Access to supportive networks, healthcare services, and anti-discrimination laws are available in Australia to protect individuals living with HIV. It's essential to consider the context and choose a supportive environment when disclosing your status, ensuring informed consent and maintaining confidentiality

In Australia, HIV is now considered a manageable condition due to advancements in treatment. However, one lesser-known aspect is the potential impact of HIV on neurological health. HIV-associated neurocognitive disorders (HAND) are a group of conditions that affect cognition, motor function, and behavior, and they can occur in people living with HIV.

The introduction of antiretroviral therapy (ART) has significantly reduced the severity of HIV-related neurological disorders, but they still affect a notable proportion of individuals. These disorders can manifest in various ways, from mild cognitive impairment to more severe conditions impacting daily life.

Should you have concerns about HAND, ask your GP or caseworker, they can provide resources and support, including information about managing neurological health. Access to healthcare and ongoing research play a crucial role in understanding and managing these conditions.

Understanding the signs and symptoms of HIV-related neurodegenerative disorders is vital for timely intervention and management. It's crucial for both patients and healthcare providers to stay informed and proactive in addressing these conditions for an improved quality of life.



## Ageing and HIV

As medical advancements continue to improve the lives of those living with HIV, a growing demographic faces a new set of challenges—ageing with the virus. In Australia, the landscape of HIV has shifted significantly, with an increasing number of individuals reaching their senior years while managing the complexities of HIV.

Improved treatments have transformed HIV from a once life-threatening condition to a chronic illness. Consequently, individuals diagnosed decades ago are now facing age-related health issues along with the long-term effects of the virus and its treatments. This presents a unique situation where healthcare providers need to address both the typical challenges of ageing and the specific needs of HIV patients.

Australia has made significant strides in healthcare services for HIV patients, but the intersection of HIV and ageing requires tailored support. Elderly HIV patients often encounter higher rates of comorbidities such as cardiovascular disease, bone density problems, and mental health concerns. This necessitates a holistic approach that integrates geriatric care with specialised HIV management.



While there's progress, there's also a need for increased awareness, research, and specialised care for the aging HIV population. By understanding and addressing the unique medical, psychological, and social needs of older individuals living with HIV, Australia can ensure a better quality of life for this growing demographic.



**The Consumer Advisory Group** is a way that clients can provide the HIV Outreach Team with their concerns and opinions about service delivery. Membership is voluntary and comprises of our Consumer Representative, clients & former clients of the service, carers and staff. Client participants are paid for their time. Speak up and have a voice, your opinions matter. Contact HOT for further details.

## Embracing Connections: Strategies to Avoid Loneliness During the Holiday Season

The holiday season, especially Christmas, is traditionally associated with joy, warmth, and togetherness. However, for many, it can be a challenging time, evoking feelings of loneliness. Whether due to distance from loved ones, loss, or personal circumstances, the sense of isolation can be particularly pronounced during this time. Yet, there are numerous ways to navigate this season and find connection.


Firstly, reaching out is key. Embrace technology to connect virtually with family and friends. Hosting or participating in online gatherings, sharing stories, and engaging in activities together can bridge physical gaps. Volunteer work is another potent antidote to loneliness. Engaging in charitable activities not only helps those in need but also fosters a sense of community and purpose.

Exploring local events or community initiatives can also offer a sense of belonging. Joining support groups, attending religious services, or participating in hobby clubs can introduce new connections and provide comfort during the holidays.

Self-care should not be overlooked. Engage in activities that bring joy—reading, cooking, or exercising. Taking time for oneself can help in maintaining emotional well-being.

Remember, the essence of the season is about love and compassion. While physical presence might be a challenge, nurturing connections and finding moments of joy can alleviate the feeling of being alone during Christmas. Embracing the spirit of togetherness in diverse ways can truly illuminate the season.

Ultimately, while the holiday season can intensify feelings of loneliness, there are numerous avenues to foster connection, community, and personal well-being. It's a time to reach out, embrace support, and rediscover the essence of togetherness, ensuring that no one truly feels alone during this festive period.



## Unheard Voices: The Perspective of Queer Indigenous Australians and the Failure of the Voice Referendum

In the rich tapestry of Australia's history, the voices and experiences of queer Indigenous Australians have often been marginalised, presenting a complex intersection of identities within their communities. The failure of the Voice Referendum, which aimed to establish a constitutionally enshrined advisory body for Indigenous peoples, represents a missed opportunity for inclusive representation.

From their perspective, the referendum's failure echoes a longstanding struggle for visibility and recognition. Queer Indigenous individuals face compounded challenges, navigating issues of cultural acceptance and systemic inequalities. Despite diverse efforts to amplify their voices, the lack of acknowledgment within this critical constitutional reform perpetuates their exclusion.

Their stories reflect resilience and a call for broader acknowledgment. To truly progress as a nation, recognising and embracing the multifaceted identities and perspectives of all Indigenous Australians, including those who identify as queer, is pivotal for reconciliation and treaty.



*We acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the land we live and work on as the first people of this country.*

*We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging. Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.*





## 2023 IAS Conference - Brisbane

**OzHarvest** is an Australian food rescue organisation dedicated to fighting food waste and hunger. Founded by Ronni Kahn in 2004, OzHarvest collects excess food from various sources, such as restaurants, supermarkets, and caterers, to distribute it to charities supporting people in need.

**Refettorio** goes beyond just providing food; it's about creating a welcoming environment where individuals can enjoy meals prepared by talented chefs using rescued ingredients.

For more information scan the QR Code or call

0493 163 136



The **International AIDS Society** conference in July, was a pivotal event, highlighting significant takeaways in the ongoing fight against HIV/AIDS. Among the key themes, the conference emphasised the importance of continued global collaboration and innovation in addressing HIV/AIDS. Breakthroughs in research, treatment, and prevention strategies were key focal points, with advancements in long-acting therapies and novel treatment options being prominently discussed.

Moreover, the conference underlined the necessity of prioritising health equity, aiming to bridge gaps in access to care and resources for marginalised communities affected by HIV/AIDS. Discussions on destigmatising HIV, improving testing and diagnostic methods, and the role of community engagement were also pivotal takeaways. Notably, the conference emphasised the urgent need for sustained funding, political commitment, and the integration of HIV/AIDS efforts into broader health systems to achieve the ambitious goal of ending the epidemic by 2030.

The collective insights and commitments made during the conference underscored the necessity of a comprehensive, inclusive approach to combatting HIV/AIDS globally.



## **Inclusion Day Christmas Party**



Come along  
Thursday  
21 December 2023

**SURRY HILLS  
COMMUNITY CENTRE**  
Enid Cook Room, Level  
1, 405 Crown Street  
Surry Hills

12:00—1:30pm

RSVP  
by 1 Dec 2023  
0449 821 964

Lifeline	13 11 14
Beyond Blue	1300 22 46 36
Headspace	1800 650 890
Men's Line Australia	1300 789 978
Aboriginal Torres Strait	13 92 76 ( YARN )
Crisis Care	(02) 9223 1111

**Contact these services to talk or referral for assistance.**

**HOT will be available to call over holiday period as well**

**Phone: (02) 9382-8666**

**Mobile: 0407 404 320**

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Newsletter scan the QR code**



**Health**  
South Eastern Sydney  
Local Health District