

## All-star lineup for VAC's 2017 Midsumma Hypothetical, including David Marr, Benjamin Law and Judith Lucy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

13 JANUARY 2017 — The Victorian AIDS Council (VAC) Midsumma Hypothetical is back for 2017 with an all-star lineup that includes journalist David Marr, author Benjamin Law and comedian Judith Lucy.

Now in its third year, VAC's Midsumma Hypothetical uses the format once made famous by Geoffrey Robertson on the ABC in the late 1980s: a panel of guests discuss questions on a particular theme arising from a hypothetical narrative. Previous VAC hypotheticals have looked at drug and alcohol issues within LGBTI communities, and at the state of LGBTI issues in federal politics.

This year's hypothetical is *Who Killed Sharon Swallows?*, a whodunit set in a small country town in Victoria where each panellist is under suspicion for the murder of fictional right-wing columnist Sharon Swallows.

As the hypothetical unfolds, the columnist's attacks on the LGBTI community place each panellist in the spotlight as a potential suspect and raise difficult questions. Should free speech mean columnists can say whatever they want? Should businesses be able to discriminate against LGBTI people on religious grounds? Is being LGBTI fundamentally un-Australian?

"After a year when LGBTI issues became a major fault line in both Australian and international politics, a hypothetical built around a caricature of a right-wing columnist is a fun way to get at some of the issues dividing the broader community," said VAC CEO Simon Ruth.

"It's important for our community to be able to talk openly about thorny topics like racism, HIV stigma and transphobia, and the hypothetical is a great opportunity to foster discussion."

Panellist Professor Dennis Altman has a connection to the original Geoffrey Robertson hypotheticals.

"Thirty years ago I clashed with Fred Nile on Geoffrey Robertson's Hypothetical *Does Dracula have AIDS?* A great deal has changed since then, but we're still facing some of the same bigotry, if in very different guises," said Altman.

Back for his third year in the Hypothetical and his second as moderator is comedian Adam Richard.

"I'm looking forward to a frank exchange of opinions and some big laughs from a very diverse panel. Given the broad intellect of our panel, I'm going to be on my toes the entire time. It's gigs like this where I really regret the fact that I didn't finish university," said Richard.

"I can't even imagine the kinds of innuendo I'm going to have to wrap my tongue around given the title is *Who Killed Sharon Swallows?* VAC have no doubt cooked up quite a ribald murder mystery for me!"

The full line-up of panellists for the 2017 VAC Midsumma Hypothetical:

Moderator — Adam Richard, comedian  
 David Marr, journalist and biographer  
 Benjamin Law, journalist and author  
 Judith Lucy, comedian  
 Professor Dennis Altman, author and academic  
 Associate Professor Edwina Wright, HIV researcher and clinician  
 Karen Price, Deputy CEO at ACON  
 Michelle Sheppard, broadcaster and entrepreneur  
 Joel Murray, advocate and activist  
 Tennille Moisel, JOY 94.9 CEO

*Who Killed Sharon Swallows?* is on Tuesday, 17 January at 7pm at Deakin Edge, Federation Square. The event is free to attend but spaces are limited. To register, go to [vac.org.au/hypothetical](http://vac.org.au/hypothetical).

The event will also be broadcast live on Channel 31, and via a live stream on VAC's Facebook page.

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