



MIPA

Meaningful Involvement of People
Living with and Affected by HIV



Report and Action Plan
for 2016-18

“It’s been an honour to be part of the committee. As an Aboriginal woman living with HIV, this work is pivotal in enhancing the meaningful involvement of the diverse community of PLHIV at all levels, volunteers, staff and board members. With the ongoing implementation of this report, VAC will further develop an inclusive, empowering, safe and supportive environment for all PLHIV.”

- Bev Greet, OAM

VAC acknowledges the work of the MIPA Committee and thanks the members for their time and commitment to the meaningful involvement of people living with HIV.

VAC Staff representatives:

- Kent Burgess, Director of Services (Convenor)
- Alex Nikolovski, Positive Living Centre Coordinator (Acting Convenor)
- Wendy Brokenshire, Counselling and Alcohol & Other Drug Support Program Manager
- John Hall, VAC Partnerships Manager
- Campbell Smith, Community Support Program
- Marcus Younger, Community Support Program
- Harry McAnulty, Health Promotion
- Gerry O’Brien, Client Care and Support
- Sue Kimberley, Quality Coordinator
- John Manwaring, Policy Analyst

Community representatives:

- Beth Wilson AM, former Victorian Health Services Commissioner (Chair)
- Richard Keane
- Stephanie Christian
- Bev Greet
- Chris
- Bella
- Sarah Feagan
- Don Harris

The Committee was very ably supported by Richard Gray, VAC Administration



CEO’s Message

I am delighted to present this Report and Action Plan outlining VAC’s formal review over the past eighteen months of the Meaningful Involvement of People Living with and Affected by HIV (MIPA).

The Victorian AIDS Council (VAC) is a community-controlled organisation that is driven by the engagement of our communities: all those living with and affected by HIV, and all sexually and gender diverse people. VAC is committed in its constitution to welcoming, encouraging, and facilitating the participation of people living with HIV in all aspects of its work and recognises that the meaningful involvement of people with HIV is vital to an effective HIV response.

People living with and affected by HIV are a key source of strength for the organisation as we continue our commitment to developing and delivering services by our communities for our communities. From the beginnings of the epidemic, our community members living with HIV have participated at all levels of the organisation. With current developments in HIV treatment and prevention, we can now see a future when HIV transmissions move close to zero. We will not achieve this without our community members living with HIV continuing to be central at all levels of our work - leadership, planning, development and service delivery.

I would like to thank all those community representatives who have voluntarily worked so hard on this review and the Action Plan, summarised here. It is through working together that we will achieve our vision of an Australia without HIV and a world where all sexually and gender diverse people live with dignity, with equal rights, and participate fully in our society.

Simon Ruth, CEO

What is MIPA?

VAC as a community-led organisation is committed to and promotes the meaningful involvement of People Living with HIV (PLHIV).

As the HIV sector has grown globally, best practice standards have been developed to ensure that people living with and affected by HIV remain at the core of the design, implementation, monitoring and review of prevention, treatment and support programs. These formal standards are known as the MIPA Principle – Meaningful involvement of people living with and affected by HIV (formerly GIPA – Greater involvement of People Living with HIV).

The MIPA standards (*NGO Code of Good Practice*) address two core principles of HIV community involvement:

1. **Advocating for the meaningful involvement** of PLHIV and affected communities in all aspects of the HIV response.
2. **Fostering active and meaningful involvement** of PLHIV and affected communities in all our activities.



VAC's MIPA Organisational Audit

Over the past year the MIPA Committee has overseen a formal assessment against and application of the MIPA standards at VAC. This included completion of a formal Self Assessment Audit. This Audit then led the Committee to oversee and endorse the MIPA Action Plan 2016-17, summarised on pages 6 and 7.

The Audit found that VAC demonstrates commitment to the MIPA principles. This is seen in the following ways:

- * Recruitment to positions for Board members, staff and volunteers continues to target PLHIV across all programs and this is reflected in our staff profile
- * The HIV Services Consumer Reference Group supporting program development
- * Engaging People Living with HIV as presenters in our community forums, events and in our training for staff and volunteers
- * Our health promotion campaigns are developed and evaluated with the input of PLHIV
- * VAC is a founding partner and major supporter of the Positive Leadership Development Institute (PLDI) and we have created opportunities for VAC to utilise the skills of graduates in areas such as the MIPA Committee and the VAC Board itself
- * VAC's Alcohol and Other Drug Service has developed an innovative peer support program for gay men who use methamphetamine. This program, Re-wired 2.0, has been hugely successful through the leadership of graduates of the PLDI Program
- * We continue to partner with the 'Positive organisations' across many programs and events and value these strong partnerships with Living Positive Victoria/Straight Arrows and Positive Women
- * The establishment of the MIPA Committee which has also overseen the development of a Consumer & Community Participation Policy & Framework to further embed meaningful involvement across the organisation



Celebrating peer driven engagement

I have been a long-time advocate for MIPA's International "best practice" model. The role it plays in empowering individuals and communities living with and affected by HIV, with frameworks for accountability, ongoing assessment and evidence of meaningful participation of people living with HIV in an effective HIV response.

"I was proud to provide a passionate HIV positive person's voice throughout VAC's MIPA audit process."

The MIPA audit is not only about looking for gaps, it's also about identifying strengths and celebrating a proud organisational culture of building community partnerships, a commitment to peer driven methodologies and genuine engagement with those most affected by HIV across our communities.

By placing the dual goals of the well-being of people living with HIV and ending HIV at the heart of the policy response to their MIPA audit process, VAC has exemplified its commitment to diversity of engagement with ALL people living with HIV.

- **Richard Keane** MIPA Committee Member and President of Living Positive Victoria

Leading inclusion and support

I began volunteering with VAC in 2007. Upon completing a peer support group at The Positive Living Centre, as a participant, I was inspired to undertake the facilitator training and lead a group myself. I have been involved in a number of groups since and more recently, after attending the Positive Leadership Development Institute (PLDI) in June 2016. I was moved to get involved with Re-wired 2.0, an ongoing support group for men who are motivated to change their behaviour in relation to crystal meth addiction.

"The peer to peer services offered at VAC can act to connect participants from a culture of isolation, hopelessness and addiction to a culture of inclusion and recovery."

The AOD team at VAC have been instrumental in supporting me through the necessary training and integrating me into their current team of Re-wired 2.0 facilitators. Volunteering with VAC allows me to share my lived experiences with the hope to encourage others to articulate their own goals for recovery and healing, learn and practice new skills and to model effective coping techniques while encouraging self-advocacy.

- **Stephen** Community Member and VAC Volunteer

VAC's Commitment

In order to realise the greater meaningful involvement of people living with HIV, VAC commits to do the following:

- * create and foster an environment in which all people living with HIV feel comfortable, safe, and secure in disclosing their HIV status, while being encouraged and empowered to utilise their lived experience to contribute to organisational policy and practice
- * actively promote open positions to people living with HIV, including volunteer, staff and supplier opportunities
- * in recruitment, if all other factors are equal, and the field of candidates includes a person or people living with HIV, the position will be filled by a person living with HIV
- * recognise disclosure of HIV is the right and prerogative of the individual. VAC will respect and maintain the privacy of all people living with HIV, and keep their status confidential unless they choose to disclose it

VAC's MIPA Action Plan 2016-18

Through the audit, the MIPA Committee in collaboration with staff across VAC identified areas for ongoing quality improvement to further develop the role of people living with and affected by HIV across the organisation. These form the VAC MIPA Action Plan 2016-18, summarised on pages 6 and 7.

The Future

The MIPA Action Plan is VAC core business and is incorporated into our ongoing quality improvement work. The MIPA Committee continues to support us, meeting to oversee and guide the implementation. Progress against the MIPA Plan is reported to the MIPA Committee, Senior Management and the Board.

	Action	VAC Involvement	Progress	
Principle 1: Advocating for the meaningful involvement of PLHIV and affected communities in all aspects of the HIV response	Policy Commitment	Client and community participation policy to be developed	Organisation-wide ✓ Achieved, being implemented	
	Community Development	Deliver Stride Tender – a two-year research project focusing on men 30-65, funded by Beyond Blue and Movember, to develop a web-based community	Communications Occurring, STRIDE websites Pete.org.au and Dale.org.au have launched and are currently live	
	Leadership opportunities	Continue to support the Positive Leadership Development Institute (PLDI) and continue to create opportunities for PLDI graduates	Organisation-wide PLDI graduates have taken up opportunities to participate in the MIPA Committee, VAC Board and VAC peer support programs e.g. Re-wired 2.0	
	Awareness, Training and Education	Build into Communications Plan need to include PLHIV in campaign messaging when relevant	Health Promotion	✓ Achieved
		Include PLHIV voices in training, in conferences and forums, on panels and in Counselling and Alcohol and Other Drug Support Program volunteer induction	Counselling and AOD Support Program	Occurring and ongoing
		To explore sponsorship options for a positive person to present at a relevant forum in Australia	Organisation-wide	Provided with sponsorship to the World AIDS Conference during 2016. To be provided for an Australian Conference this year.
	Partnerships and Networking	Continue efforts to include PLHIV in public awareness activities and as role models	Organisation-wide	Occurring, e.g. the Early Treatment Campaign featuring positive people as role models.
		Continue to strengthen partnerships with PLHIV by creating ongoing opportunities to work with Living Positive Victoria, Straight Arrows and Positive Women	Organisation-wide	Occurring, e.g. Positive Women's Peer Support role co-founded with VAC and working across services
		Explore Memorandum of Understanding with Positive Women	Organisation-wide	Memorandum of Understanding has been drafted
		Enhanced relationship between Positive Women and Counselling and Alcohol and Other Drug Support Program to encourage referral pathways	Counselling and AOD Support Program	Achieving, female CASP Counsellor has been out-posted to Coventry House, referrals increased
Explore development of women-only spaces and services and/or a Women's Day at the Positive Living Centre or externally, as well as supporting women's access to services at all times, working collaboratively with Positive Women and making service spaces welcoming for women		Services	Annual Women's Day at Positive Living Centre in partnership with Positive Organisations occurs Ongoing focus on women's inclusive programs occurring	
Employment opportunities	Recruitment policy to be reviewed to ensure that affirmative action is explicitly documented in the policy rather than inferred	Human Resources	In process	
	Actively promote employment opportunities to PLHIV. For example New Home Care Team in Community Support Program	Organisation-wide	Occurring	
	Expansion of peer support, including in regional areas, with PLHIV providing social and emotional support to newly diagnosed people	Community Support	Occurring, Peer Support EFT expanded, now active in Barwon Health, Monash Health and Royal Melbourne Hospital	
Peer-leadership and peer support	Plan to develop client-led peer social groups for those moving on from volunteer support, to encourage client independence, recognising that some need ongoing or intermittent support	Community Support	First activities trialled late 2015	
	Plan to establish a team of volunteers living with HIV to provide peer support to newly diagnosed, including young people	Services and the Volunteer Program	Trial undertaken, review planned	
	Development and implementation of revised Peer facilitator training program	Services and Health Promotion	Occurring, this is now cross-organisational and includes Positive Women	
Participation in organisational and service planning and development	Promote Board vacancies for Positive representation on the Board to include diverse PLHIV including women, trans and gender diverse people	Organisation-wide	Ongoing, vacancies filled in 2015	
	Commitment to getting input from PLHIV in the design of the VAC relocation	Organisation-wide	PLHIV reps on Facilities Committee and consultation occurring and planned	
	Establish Trans and Gender Diverse Advisory Group inclusive of PLHIV	Organisation-wide	✓ Achieved, January 2016	
	Identify positive Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) people including PLHIV for Reconciliation Action Plan Committee	Services and the ATSI Project	✓ Achieved, 3 Aboriginal members identified and attend VAC Reconciliation Action Committee	
	Review HIV Services Advisory Group and ensure inclusion of Positive Organisations, Community Support Program and David Williams Fund and Counselling and Alcohol and Drug Program	Services and the David Williams Fund	✓ Achieved, 2016. HIV Services Advisory Group has met Positive Organisations representatives	
	Explore with members of HIV Services Advisory Committee and Positive Living Centre (PLC) Consumer Reference Group to be expanded to include all HIV Services and David Williams Fund	PLC, Client Services and the David Williams Fund	✓ Achieved, May 2016	
	Continue to expand involvement of PLHIV as key providers of information, knowledge and skills	PRONTO!	Included in the PRONTO! Program Plan	
Client feedback about VAC services	Develop consistent Organisation-wide Clients Complaints process (incorporating current processes)	Organisation-wide	✓ Achieved 2016 and being implemented	
	At PRONTO! collect and utilise feedback of clients who have receive reactive results to improve future service provision	PRONTO!	Occurring, with the process to be further developed	
	Positive Living Centre (PLC) undertake two yearly client feedback survey	PLC, Community Support and the David Williams Fund	To be included in Program Plans	
PLHIV community events	Adjust Community Support evaluation questionnaire to have specific questions for women	Community Support	Included in Community Support's Program Plan	
	Transgender and other film nights, and associated discussion, using new Positive Living Centre projection system	Community Support	Occurring, 3 film nights provided in past 12 months attended by 150+ participants	

VAC's MIPA Action Plan 2016-18



Improving the lives of PLHIV

Every day we step into the lives of PLHIV and bring them support, assistance and companionship, but most importantly we bring a degree of normalcy to lives punctuated by the advent of HIV & AIDS.

“We make life happen for
PLHIV every day.”

Through VAC's range of community programs we are there every day providing positive reinforcement; hand in hand with us most claim back part of their lives that have been interrupted, sometimes to an overwhelming degree, by HIV.

It is heart-warming when people see they have the ability to step off the “AIDS” treadmill and live life as they used to.

- **Steve Sheppard** VAC Peer Support
and Home Care Worker

