

MEDIA RELEASE
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ViiV Healthcare awards new grants to accelerate community-led solutions to HIV challenges

Four Australian HIV community organisations have received a share in close to \$155,000 funding through ViiV Healthcare's Positive Action Community Grants (PACG) 2017 program. The grants support local organisations to implement programs that respond to some of the most pressing issues facing people living with HIV (PLHIV) and reduce the impact of HIV in Australia. Funds are allocated to community-led programs addressing stigma and discrimination; barriers to testing, treatment and care; and quality of life for PLHIV.

Now in its third year, ViiV Healthcare's PACG 2017 program has awarded grants to:

- **National Association of People with HIV Australia (NAPWHA)** for a HIV and ageing program to address retention in care and quality of life for PLHIV.
- **Living Positive Victoria** for a program involving HIV peer-liaison in general practice clinics to support retention in care for people newly diagnosed.
- **Queensland Positive People** for a peer-led stigma reduction intervention program to support resilience building, engagement in care and improve quality of life of PLHIV.
- **Positive Women Victoria** for a research project looking at the needs of women from African diaspora communities in Victoria living with HIV to support linkage to care and improvement of quality of life.

"Ensuring our future response to HIV is effective and relevant requires the meaningful involvement of PLHIV. That's why, at ViiV Healthcare, we believe it is crucial that communities have the resources to develop and implement programs that are relevant to their community members. By allocating vital funds where they are needed most, we hope that a real, lasting and positive impact on Australia's HIV community can be achieved." ViiV Healthcare Australia's Community Affairs Manager, Oonagh Rocks said.

Medical advances are enabling PLHIV to live longer and it's expected that 44% of Australian PLHIV will be aged over 55 by 2020.^{i,ii} As the HIV population ages they are likely to experience more health issues than the general population.ⁱⁱⁱ A better understanding of these issues is required to help PLHIV have a good future quality of life. The **National Association of People with HIV Australia (NAPWHA)** has been awarded a grant to explore these challenges and develop an advocacy agenda for HIV and ageing.

"Our PACG grant will support research into the emerging issues relating to ageing with HIV in Australia, such as the impact of co-morbidities. This will enable us to plan and respond to this urgent challenge facing the country's ageing and disability sectors, to meet the future needs of Australia's HIV population," NAPWHA Executive Director, Aaron Cogle explained.

Investigation into HIV care in Australia reveals gaps in the provision of support for people recently diagnosed with HIV. The most recent Kirby Institute Annual Surveillance Report published in 2016 shows that of those living with HIV 90% are diagnosed, but 15% are not in care, 25% are not on antiretroviral therapy and 31% do not have controlled virus levels.^{iv} A PACG grant for **Living Positive Victoria** will support community-led action by placing a peer liaison officer in four high HIV-positive case load general practice clinics across Melbourne to respond to these gaps and improve linkage to HIV care for PLHIV in Victoria.

“The immediacy of peer contact for people newly diagnosed with HIV cannot be understated, not only providing support for the individual at a crucial time, but increasing the likelihood of PLHIV remaining in care and not being lost in follow up. Our PACG grant will go a long way in supporting us to improve treatment outcomes for PLHIV in Victoria,” said Suzy Malhotra, Acting CEO Living Positive Victoria.

HIV stigma remains a debilitating feature for those living with the virus and can occur at both the population and individual level.ⁱ **Queensland Positive People** will be provided with a grant to support the development of a stigma resilience workshop and module for Peer Navigators.

“Queensland differs to other states in that a large percentage of the PLHIV population reside in rural and regional locations making them more vulnerable to social isolation and experiences of stigma and discrimination. By holding peer-led workshops in both Brisbane and in rural Queensland we aim to reach PLHIV right across Queensland,” Queensland Positive People Life+ Program Manager, Chris Howard explained.

With approximately 50% of women recently diagnosed with HIV in Australia coming from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds, including a large percentage (13.7 per 100,000) from Sub-Saharan Africa, the need for greater understanding of the experiences of African-born women living with HIV in Australia has been identified.^{iv} With the support of PACG, **Positive Women Victoria** is leading a qualitative research project to improve sector-wide understanding in this area.

“At Positive Women Victoria, we’ve identified African-born women as a hard to reach group and we know that there is a gap in the sector’s understanding of the needs of these women. With the support of PACG, we’re implementing research to improve understanding of their needs and we hope to see this lead to positive outcomes for these women, including earlier linkage to testing and care services, a reduction in stigma and discrimination, and improvement in their quality of life,” Positive Women Victoria, Chief Executive Officer, Alison Boughey said.

More information about the 2017 PACG programs can be found at www.viivhealthcare.com.au

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About Positive Action Community Grant – Australia (PACG – Australia)

Positive Action was created in 1992 by ViiV Healthcare’s heritage company, GSK. It was the first pharmaceutical company program of its kind to support communities affected by HIV and AIDS. Positive Action works with those communities most vulnerable to HIV disease. ViiV Healthcare supports communities through grants to HIV organisations that deliver greater and meaningful involvement of people living with HIV, enable grassroots community action, tackle stigma and discrimination, reduce violence against at-risk populations, test innovations in education, care and treatment, and build capacity in communities.

About ViiV Healthcare

ViiV Healthcare is a global specialist HIV company established in November 2009 by GlaxoSmithKline (LSE: GSK) and Pfizer (NYSE: PFE) dedicated to delivering advances in treatment and care for people living with HIV. Shionogi joined in October 2012. The company’s aim is to take a deeper and broader

interest in HIV/AIDS than any company has done before and take a new approach to deliver effective and new HIV medicines as well as support communities affected by HIV. ViiV Healthcare Australia is based in Melbourne. For more information on the company, its management, portfolio, pipeline and commitment, please visit: www.viivhealthcare.com.au

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^{iv} Kirby Institute. 2016. HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections in Australia. Annual Surveillance Report 2016. Available online: <https://kirby.unsw.edu.au/report/annual-surveillance-report-hiv-viral-hepatitis-stis-2016>