



Leaders in the  
HIV community  
response

# strategic directions

2011 - 2015

# president's message

AFAO's *Strategic Directions* 2011-2015 provides a clear, strong framework to shape our community response to HIV through the next five years – consolidating the good work we are renowned for but challenging us to take up the emerging issues in Australia's changing HIV epidemic.

Many stakeholders – both internal and external to AFAO - contributed to this framework. I want to thank everyone involved for their input. We interviewed more than fifty external people and all our Member Organisations participated in the innovative and energetic Strategic Planning workshop (held in April 2010) and follow-up drafts and discussions.

As the patterns of HIV infection change in Australia – quite rapidly in some jurisdictions; as the nation's health system undergoes major systemic changes through the next five years; as the Asia Pacific and Global HIV responses evolve unpredictably; and as our Member Organisations themselves continue to evolve in new directions – we need a framework that is comprehensive yet flexible, clear but not stifflingly prescriptive.

I think we have collectively achieved this and I commend AFAO's *Strategic Directions* 2011-2015 to you.

**Graham Brown**  
AFAO President  
May 2011

# our vision; our purpose

Living in a world with  
HIV/AIDS; working for a  
world without HIV/AIDS.

# our role

AFAO is the national federation for the HIV community response. We provide leadership, coordination and support to Australia's policy, advocacy and health promotion response to HIV/AIDS. Internationally we contribute to the development of effective policy and programmatic responses to HIV/AIDS at the global level, particularly in the Asia Pacific region.

# our work

AFAO's work focuses on:

- Providing HIV policy advice to the Federal Government and to the community, so as to facilitate implementation of the *Sixth National HIV Strategy*, and complementary aspects of the *Second Sexually Transmissible Infections Strategy* and the *Third National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sexually Transmissible Infections and Blood Borne Viruses Strategy*
- Ensuring representation of the HIV community sector on national HIV policy-making and advisory bodies
- Designing, devising and coordinating innovative national HIV prevention, positive education and health promotion campaigns
- Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to develop targeted, culturally appropriate resources regarding sexual health, and addressing emerging issues such as injecting drug use
- Developing and advocating strategic policy responses and interventions in the international HIV epidemic, particularly in the Asia Pacific region
- Providing assistance and support to community groups and regional NGO networks in the Asia Pacific region
- Promoting and participating in the ethical development and trialling of HIV vaccines and microbicides
- Contributing, in collaboration with our Member Organisations and research partners, to building evidence for an effective community response to HIV

Our funding is chiefly from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing; other sources include AusAID, the AIDS Trust of Australia and private donations.

## priority communities

AFAO's work is primarily directed towards population groups where HIV or the risk of HIV is most prevalent or where there are significant emerging issues, namely: people living with HIV; gay men and other men who have sex with men; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; sex workers; people who inject drugs; people from (or who travel to) high prevalence countries; and people in custodial settings.

# our member organisations

Our membership comprises of community leadership at the National and the State/Territory levels.

Our national organisation members are:

- National Association of People Living with HIV (NAPWA)
- Anwernekenhe National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HIV/AIDS Alliance (ANA)
- Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL)
- Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association

These are separate, peer-based national organisations in their own right. Each represents a priority population and has its own independent governance and consultation processes from which it draws its expertise and leadership. AFAO works in partnership with these national organisations to utilise and complement their policy and advocacy expertise and leadership.

Our State/Territory members are the eight AIDS Councils and former AIDS Councils which lead the HIV community response in their respective state jurisdictions, and collectively support the national response. They are:

- AIDS Action Council of the ACT (AACACT)
- ACON (NSW)
- AIDS Council of South Australia (ACSA)
- Northern Territory AIDS & Hepatitis C Council (NTAHC)
- Queensland Association for Healthy Communities (QAHC)
- Tasmanian Council on AIDS, Hepatitis & Related Diseases (TasCAHRD)
- Victorian AIDS Council/Gay Men's Health Centre (VAC/GMHC)
- Western Australian AIDS Council (WAAC)

AFAO works in partnership with these AIDS Councils and former AIDS Councils, drawing on their policy, advocacy and programmatic expertise across the eight jurisdictions and their targeted work with gay and other affected communities.

AFAO also has a growing group of Affiliate Member organisations who want to work closely with AFAO and our Member Organisations.

# values which guide our work

At the centre of our work  
is our commitment to:

- respecting the dignity of all people
- respecting and valuing diversity and promoting the equality of all people
- acknowledging the special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the first Australians and respecting their communities' traditions, views and ways of life
- empowerment of HIV-positive people and affected communities and supporting their ownership and self-determined control of the response to HIV/AIDS
- enhancing the human rights of all communities and populations affected by HIV
- promoting and supporting harm reduction principles and the Ottawa Charter
- recognising the social determinants of health
- building and facilitating evidence-informed approaches to policy development, advocacy and health promotion
- being accountable to the communities we are part of - which we work with, represent and serve

# the way we work

In delivering our work  
program, we seek to:

- advocate for policies, services and programs that address the needs of specific communities in the broader context in which affected communities and populations experience HIV
- value and ensure the involvement of affected communities in our own work, and advocate for affected community involvement in the HIV response more broadly
- ensure that activities are well matched to the needs, culture and values of particular communities and population groups affected by HIV
- work in partnerships built on clear roles, common objectives, reciprocity and mutual trust
- consult closely with and draw on the knowledge and expertise of our member base
- complement the strategies of our Member Organisations, while mutually respecting each other's independence and acknowledging differences
- develop policy through transparent and inclusive consultative processes, recognising the specific expertise of the national organisation members of AFAO
- communicate widely, connecting our partners to our work and ideas
- be independent and non-party political

# AFAO strategic directions

In planning our work we seek to operate strategically, focusing on four key areas:

1. **analysis, policy and advocacy**

providing outstanding policy and advocacy to inform, shape and sustain the HIV response

2. **leadership and coordination**

supporting, connecting and coordinating agencies so there is a powerfully effective response to HIV

3. **promotion of health**

enabling affected communities and populations to make and enact decisions to promote their health and well being

4. **strength and innovation**

maintaining a strong and vibrant organisation

# 1. analysis, advocacy & direction:

providing outstanding policy and advocacy to inform, shape and sustain the HIV response

**AFAO has been at the forefront of advocating for an effective HIV response since its inception. This direction affirms AFAO's continued crucial role in this arena. The nature of the HIV epidemic has changed over the years, and the *Sixth National HIV Strategy* recognises the increasing diversity of people affected by HIV. Responding to new and emerging issues among different populations in Australia and the Asia Pacific requires us to monitor and understand these changes so as to facilitate the shaping of an effective response to HIV to 2015 and beyond.**

- We will continue to strengthen and expand our working relationships with governments, advisory bodies and other decision makers at a national level across a range of portfolios. This will include AFAO's continued participation in ministerial and other government committees and working groups.
- We will advocate for an enabling environment that addresses the underlying causes of vulnerability to HIV and the social, legal and policy barriers to effective prevention, health promotion and service delivery.

- We will clarify and advocate the views of members in order to mobilise the political commitment and resources required to ensure access to HIV prevention, care and support services for all those who need them.
- We will provide leadership in monitoring and facilitating implementation of the *Sixth National HIV Strategy* together with the other four BBV and STI national strategies.
- We will build on AFAO's well-respected input and advocacy in the global response to HIV through continuing participation in key global decision-making bodies and influencing the Australian Government's strategies and resource allocations in the global and regional spheres.
- We will foster a strong and positive media profile on HIV issues to promote public awareness of HIV-related issues, and build support for prevention, care and support initiatives. We will identify and respond to inaccuracies in reporting that potentially affect public understanding of the virus itself, and reporting that has the potential to feed negative stereotyping of people among affected communities.
- Our work will continue to be driven by a strong evidence base and we will monitor trends and analyse research data to identify significant emerging issues in the HIV response. We will provide analysis and advice to AFAO members, governments and other stakeholders in relation to prevention of HIV and the health and wellbeing of people living with HIV.

# 2. leadership & coordination:

supporting, connecting and coordinating agencies so there is a powerfully effective response to HIV

**AFAO is recognised for the strong role it has taken over many decades in leading and coordinating the HIV community response in Australia, and more recently for playing an increasing role in the Asia Pacific. This direction affirms that AFAO will continue to play this role.**

- AFAO will deepen existing relationships within the HIV partnership, drawing a wider range of HIV agencies together for education, policy and advocacy work. We will engage with a diverse range of partners working with communities affected by HIV, domestically and internationally.
- We will build new relationships and partnerships with community leaders and organisations working with emerging communities of people affected by HIV, to pave the way for work with these communities.
- We will continue to work with the ANA on advocacy, policy and program activities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Together we will advocate to ensure that the ANA is established as an independent, funded national organisation.

- We will communicate with and strengthen our relationship with non-community sector organisations (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services, primary health care providers), as part of our efforts to broaden their capacity to respond to current and emergent issues of people living with HIV.
- We will build on AFAO's leadership role in MSM HIV strategy development, advocacy and programming support and assistance in the Asia Pacific region, and extend our collaborative work with key community partners.

# 3. promotion of health:

enabling affected communities and populations to make and enact decisions to promote their health and well being

**This direction continues to be central to AFAO, signifying our commitment to ongoing leadership and coordination in reducing risk behaviours in affected communities and improving health outcomes for HIV-positive people. We signal continuation of our existing highly valued activities, and our intention to work with our members to elevate the position of health and well-being issues in the national response, and to articulate and begin implementation of strategies to engage emerging communities and populations in the HIV response.**

- We will ensure the identification, development and tailored implementation of best practice health promotion interventions, programs and materials. We will monitor resource and workforce development needs of members and others delivering HIV and STI prevention and health promotion programs, and develop programs that build capacity among Member Organisations. We will continue to advocate for condom use as a key prevention strategy while also monitoring, assessing and advising our members on the development of new prevention and testing technologies, and where appropriate, will incorporate this information into our work to ensure that we maintain effective and relevant programs.
- We will continue to work towards, and support our membership in, creating and sustaining an enabling environment for effective health promotion. We recognise the negative impacts of persisting HIV-related stigma and discrimination on the health and wellbeing of people living with HIV, and the powerful role that fear of stigma plays in inhibiting access to testing and treatment services. In our health promotion activities we will address HIV-related stigma and discrimination that increases people's vulnerability to HIV.

- We will continue to examine the epidemiological, behavioural, social research and health promotion literature on the adoption and effectiveness of non-condom-based HIV risk reduction strategies among gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men—including negotiated safety, withdrawal, strategic positioning, serosorting, and the use of viral load test results—and where appropriate, incorporate advice on the use and effectiveness of these strategies into relevant health promotion materials and interventions.
- We will analyse data and map approaches and responses to issues faced by emerging communities affected by HIV. In collaboration with those communities, our members and other stakeholders, we will determine how best to address these issues, including by examining our own role and that of other organisations in these responses.
- We will support AFAO Member Organisations in advocating for the maintenance of HIV prevention programs that have successfully targeted particular priority populations, namely sex workers and people in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- We will monitor and respond to transitional issues arising from the restructuring of Australia's health system - in terms of the impact of new funding models on HIV prevention, care and support service provision, and in terms of the changing roles of primary health care and allied health providers under the new system.
- Together with NAPWA and other Member Organisations we will monitor surveillance and other data to identify changes in the cohort of the population of people living with HIV, such as the ageing of the cohort and increases in prevalence among particular communities. We will identify the care and support needs of people living with HIV, and plan how we can best advocate for these needs to be met. We will disseminate information to enable our members and the wider HIV NGO sector to link HIV issues, and care and support for people living with HIV, to national health system reforms and advances. We will advocate for wide implementation of best practice service models, including through the *Sixth National HIV Strategy*.

# 4. strength & innovation:

Maintaining a strong and vibrant organisation.

**This direction signifies our commitment to renewal in the way that we work with the many and diverse players within our membership and the broader community to meet the challenges of the current environment. Unity and strength of purpose are needed in the coming period to ensure that Australia remains at the forefront in preventing the spread of HIV and in anticipating and responding to the care and support needs of those affected by it. We will facilitate the building of networks to enable effective policy development on emerging issues.**

## **Supportive infrastructure:**

- We will build and nurture strong, clearly defined and inclusive relationships with AFAO Member Organisations, including developing a consensus document setting out Roles, Guidelines and Procedures with our national organisation members on how we will work together.
- We will expand AFAO's membership base and develop other partnership structures, to facilitate the involvement of the breadth of the HIV community and research sector in advocacy activities.
- We will build formal and informal networks, within and outside AFAO's membership, to efficiently consult, coordinate and/or collaborate with a diversity of organisations in the identification of policy advocacy priorities and the development of policy positions.

## **An active, inspired and diverse workforce:**

- We will encourage a work environment for AFAO staff that is supportive and invigorating.
- We will sustain and build staff capacity to deliver innovative interventions and programs.
- We will build the cultural competency of the organisation to understand and address the issues which affect the constituencies of our Member Organisations and of people among the priority populations named in the *Sixth National HIV Strategy*.
- We will explore recruitment and mentoring strategies to facilitate maintaining a vibrant, well-trained and responsive workforce, including by encouraging new entrants to the HIV community sector.



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