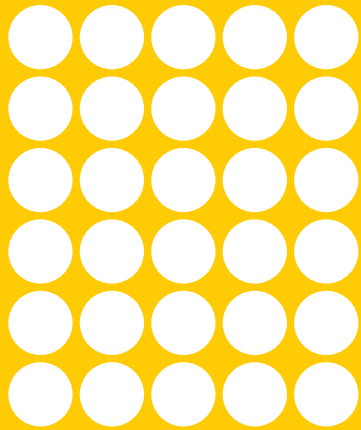




Taking a look

HIV prevention
for gay men today



This booklet explains how to avoid getting HIV
and how to avoid passing HIV on to others.

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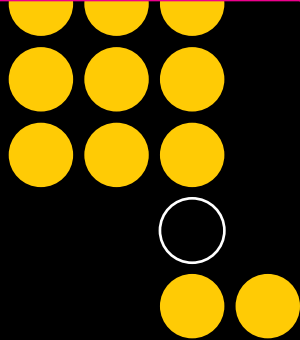
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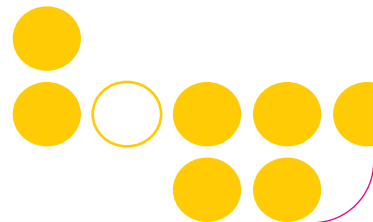
Introduction

In Australia, HIV and AIDS have mainly affected gay men. When the epidemic first hit Australia in the 1980s, gay men made dramatic changes to their sexual practices—especially by using condoms—to protect themselves and their partners.

Over 20 years later, we now know a lot more about HIV—especially the ways in which it is transmitted. Treatment for those who are already HIV positive has also come a long way. However, the development of new technologies to prevent HIV infection has not been as encouraging. For example, an effective vaccine is still a long way off. *Condoms remain the best way to prevent HIV transmission.*

In the last few years Australia has experienced a significant increase in new cases of HIV infection. These infections have mostly been among gay men.

Now is clearly the time to take a look at our own knowledge and practices.



What is HIV?

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. Since it was first identified in the 1980s, HIV/AIDS has become a worldwide epidemic. People do not get ill or die directly from HIV itself, but rather from AIDS, the condition caused by HIV.

How does HIV cause AIDS?

As it reproduces and multiplies inside the body, HIV attacks and damages the cells of the body's own immune system. Eventually the body can no longer defend itself against other infections (e.g. other viruses, bacteria, fungi). This is the condition known as AIDS. AIDS is short for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

How is HIV passed on?

HIV is transmitted from one body to another when fluids such as blood, semen (cum) and even breast milk pass from an HIV-positive person to an HIV-negative person. The most common way this happens is by anal or vaginal sex without a condom, or by sharing needles.

HIV is also present in saliva and tears, but not the amount necessary to transmit the virus to another person. Neither urine nor sweat contains HIV. You cannot get HIV from kissing, or from coffee cups or toilet seats!

Once someone is infected, they will have HIV for the rest of their life.

Seroconversion

When people first get infected with HIV they often get sick with a flu-like illness as the body reacts to the virus. This is called a seroconversion illness. However, not everyone experiences a seroconversion illness, so the only way to tell for sure if HIV infection has occurred is to get an HIV test. When someone has been recently infected with HIV they are especially likely to pass on the virus to others—not only because they may not realise they have HIV, but also because the levels of HIV in their body are especially high during seroconversion.

HIV treatments

Since 1996 there have been new drug treatments available to effectively slow down the rate at which HIV multiplies in the body. HIV-positive people take a combination of these drugs daily to minimise the effects of HIV on the immune system. While these drugs have changed being HIV positive for most people, from a death sentence to a manageable chronic condition, many also have short and long-term side-effects (e.g. diarrhoea and lipodystrophy—the redistribution of fat on the body). Even without treatment it is possible for people to have HIV for many years and remain well.

A cure?

Unfortunately there is no sign of a cure for HIV in the near future.



Fucking

A lot of gay men enjoy being fucked. Pleasure comes from stimulation of the sensitive nerve endings of the anus when you are being fucked. The anus is just beyond the sphincter (the circle of muscle that is the entrance to the anus). The area beyond the anus is the rectum, which has few nerve endings.

Pleasure also comes from having your prostate stimulated. The prostate is a walnut-sized gland found in men only. It is located alongside the rectum, where the base of your cock ends inside you, directly below your bladder. It is sensitive when touched from inside your arse (by a cock, or a finger or toy): this will make orgasm more intense.

Fucking and HIV transmission

If you are HIV negative, being fucked without a condom puts you at very high risk of HIV infection. Unlike the lining of your throat and mouth (or a vagina), the lining of your anus and rectum isn't tough. It can easily tear during fucking (or when a sex toy or finger is inserted). Bacteria and viruses can get into your bloodstream through these tears. This is why anal sex without a condom is an easy way for HIV and other sexually transmissible infections to pass from one person to another.

Also, unlike your mouth (or a vagina), your arse doesn't lubricate itself. Using lots of water-based lube during fucking will reduce the likelihood of tearing or abrasions of your arse.

Douching increases the risk of HIV infection because it removes the mucous lining of your arse. Also, using a douche with a nozzle can cause tiny cuts. (See also page 21)

Pulling out

If you are HIV positive, then pulling your cock out before cumming inside someone's arse is not enough to protect your partner from infection. He can still get infected from HIV in your pre-cum, which can enter his bloodstream through damage or cuts in the lining of his arse.

Top or tail?

If you are HIV negative you can't pass on HIV even if you cum inside someone's arse. However, if the guy you are fucking is HIV positive, you can get the virus through the meatus (the opening of your cock) or through any tiny cuts or abrasions.

Although being fucked is more risky if you are HIV negative, being the top does not mean you are protected from HIV. You aren't.



Viral load: what does it mean?

Viral load tests measure how much HIV is circulating in the blood.

HIV treatments can reduce the amount of virus to levels that are too low for current tests to measure. This is called 'undetectable viral load'. This doesn't mean the virus has disappeared entirely. Apart from still being present in the blood at reduced levels, HIV will still be present in other cells, such as in the urethra, and in cum.

An STI (sexually transmissible infection) in the urethra will also greatly increase viral load in cum and pre-cum.

Even if someone has undetectable viral load, this doesn't mean there is no risk of passing on HIV. There is.

Crossed assumptions

Many HIV-negative men think that someone with HIV will tell them before having sex or will always use condoms, but this is often not the reality, especially at beats, or in sex-on-premises venues, where people do not get to know each other before having sex.

Many HIV-positive men think that anyone who is willing to fuck without condoms must also be HIV positive. This is often not the reality.

A sex partner who does not suggest condoms could be:

- HIV negative and assuming that you are too; or
- HIV positive and assuming that you are too.

When there is no discussion, you simply cannot know which is the case.

Looking

You cannot tell by looking whether someone is HIV positive or not. Most people with HIV look the same as they did when they were HIV negative. Someone who is young, healthy or attractive may still have HIV. Also, profiles on gay chat sites are not reliable and someone with HIV may not even be aware of it himself.

Asking

Talking about HIV is better than making assumptions. However, there are still risks.

If you are HIV negative, looking for casual partners who are also HIV negative so you can fuck without condoms is not a reliable strategy for avoiding HIV infection. This is because:

- People are not always honest.
- He might be HIV positive and not know it. (When was he last tested? Has he had unprotected sex since then? With how many partners?)
- If he has recently been infected his viral load is likely to be very high. This means that fucking without condoms will carry a high risk of HIV being passed on.

For more information

Go to <http://www.thinkagain.com.au>

Can my boyfriend and I fuck without condoms?

If you are HIV negative

If you are in a relationship with someone who is also HIV negative and you want to stop using condoms, then it is possible to do this safely.

It's important that you get an HIV test before you start fucking without condoms.

Communication with your partner is also very important. Set some ground rules. If you are going to have sex with other men, you will both need to agree either to always use condoms with them, or not to have anal sex.

Go and both get an HIV test. Even if your test results are negative, keep using condoms until you have a second test. Between six and twelve weeks later, go and both get tested again. If these second tests also come back negative, and you've both had only protected sex in the meantime, you can be certain you're both HIV negative. If you are both HIV negative you can stop using condoms with each other.

You need to be sure that you and your partner are honest with each other about unprotected sex outside the relationship. If one of you does fuck without a condom with someone else, you need to be able to discuss this as soon as it happens. Also, you will have to start using condoms again with each other until you have made sure that neither of you has become infected with HIV. Things change over

time so keep talking to each other about whether you want to continue with this kind of agreement. Change your agreement if either of you can't stick to the rules.

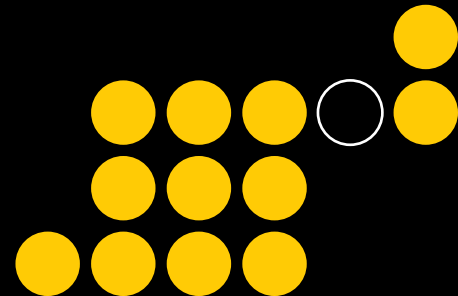
For more information

Go to <http://www.stayingnegative.net.au/>

If you are HIV positive

If you are in a relationship with someone who is also HIV positive and you want to fuck without condoms, one issue to think about is re-infection with a different strain of HIV—also called 'superinfection'. Although this does not seem to occur on a widespread scale, it has happened to some individuals. Talk to your partner about whether you are prepared to risk re-infection from each other or from other casual sex partners.

Another consideration when not using condoms is other STIs (sexually transmissible infections). Some STIs such as syphilis have a more serious impact on people with HIV. Make sure you get a regular sexual health check.



Sucking

Oral sex (sucking) is a very common sexual practice. It is extremely pleasurable for the guy getting sucked off.

If you are not used to sucking it's important to prevent your teeth getting caught on his cock. You can do this by slightly curling your lips around your teeth. Another problem is gagging, which can happen when his cock hits the back of your throat. This can be managed in a few ways: by timing your breathing around his thrusting (i.e. breathe in when he pulls his cock back); by gripping your hand around the shaft of his cock to control the thrusting; and tilting your head back to make a straighter line from your mouth to the back of your throat.

Sucking and HIV

The risk of getting HIV through oral sex is extremely low, even if you get cum in your mouth. However, a few men have become infected with HIV after sucking off an HIV-positive man. This happens because of cuts, sores or ulcers in the mouth, caused by gum disease or another STI.

Tips:

- Keep your gums healthy: this will reduce the risk of HIV transmission during oral sex.
- Get regular sexual health tests. An infection in your throat increases the risk of HIV transmission.
- Avoid brushing or flossing your teeth within an hour or so of oral sex—brushing and flossing can cause tiny cuts to the gums.



Condoms

Condoms come in all shapes and sizes. They are usually made of latex and you need to use water-based lubricant with them when fucking.

If you are allergic to latex there are also condoms made of polyurethane. Polyurethane is stronger and thinner than latex and oil-based lubricants can be used with them.



Size

Make sure you have the right size for you. Condoms generally come in Medium, Large and Extra Large. Condoms should be tight enough not to crumple during fucking but not too tight that they split.

Putting it on

- Rip the packet open. Take care not to tear or damage the condom inside.
- Unroll the condom down the length of your cock. Make sure you don't have it inside out as this will make it difficult to unroll.
- Apply plenty of water-based lubricant to the outside of the condom (oil-based lube will weaken the latex). Applying a little lube to the head of your cock before putting the condom on can increase the sensation during fucking.
- Make sure you put on a condom before any contact with the arse. Rubbing the tip of the cock against the arse, or pushing it inside slightly can lead to HIV being passed on.

Checking on progress

- Never re-use a condom.
- Use a new condom for every partner.
- Check the condom regularly during sex to ensure it hasn't broken or come off.
- Change condoms every so often if you are fucking for long periods of time.

If a condom breaks there is a treatment called PEP that may prevent HIV infection. (See page 22.)

Taking it off

- Once you've come, hold the base of the condom with your hand as you are pulling out so it doesn't come off.
- Dispose of it thoughtfully!

Condom care

- Condoms have use-by dates because the latex weakens over time. Throw out any that are past their use-by date.
- Carry or store condoms carefully: they can be damaged or weakened from rubbing or crushing (in a wallet for example) or if they are exposed to heat for too long.

Can't keep it up?

Many men have trouble getting or keeping an erection while putting on or using condoms. Erection difficulties are experienced more often by older men and by HIV-positive men.

If this is a problem for you, discuss it with your doctor. Sometimes it is caused by smoking or drinking too much. There are specific treatments for erection difficulties.

For more information

Go to <http://www.condoms.org.au>



Sex play and HIV

Rimming

You cannot get or pass on HIV by rimming (licking out someone's arse). However hepatitis A and gut infections such as shigella are easily passed on this way.

Fingering

Playing with someone's arse with your fingers is a low risk activity for passing on HIV. However, it is important to keep your fingernails trimmed and short so as not to cut the delicate wall of the anus. Wash your hands well after fingering to prevent gut infections being passed on.

Fisting

Fisting means inserting your fist in someone's arse. Fists can create serious cuts in the lining of the arse, which can allow HIV to be passed on if the person being fisted is then fucked without a condom, or if a finger or sex toy with cum or blood on it is inserted in his arse. The person doing the fisting could also get HIV if he has any cuts or scratches. Latex gloves are important for protecting both participants. Surgical gloves are best. Be sure to remove your watch and any jewellery before fisting!

Toys

HIV can be transmitted from person-to-person via sex toys such as dildos and buttplugs, if they are being shared. Putting a condom on toys and changing the condom before using it on a

different person will prevent HIV being passed on. Alternatively, you can wash sex toys thoroughly with soap and hot water after each person. Sex toys that are shared but not cleaned can also transmit other STIs (sexually transmissible infections).

Douching

Douching is a way of cleaning your arse before being fucked. This is done by inserting a tube into your arse and flushing it with water. Douching increases the risk of HIV infection because it removes the mucous lining of your arse. Also, using a douche with a nozzle can cause tiny cuts.

Piercing

Many men find body and genital piercings a turn-on. There are a few things about piercings to be aware of:

- Genital piercings such as a Prince Albert (a ring through the bottom of the head of the penis) can cause tears and abrasions in the anus during fucking.
- Be careful that piercings on the cock don't tear the condom.
- New piercings do occasionally get infected: if this happens to your genital piercing, avoid sex until it has healed as the infection can increase chances of passing on or getting HIV.
- Like tattooing, getting a piercing involves penetrating the skin with a needle and so could pass on HIV or other STIs if the needle is not adequately sterilised between piercings. Always use a reputable professional piercer.

PEP (Post-exposure prophylaxis)

PEP is treatment you can take if you have been exposed to HIV. It may prevent you from becoming HIV positive.

HIV takes a few days to become established in the body. PEP helps your body's immune system to stop the virus from replicating in infected cells. These originally infected cells then die without producing new copies of the virus.

PEP must start to be taken as soon as possible, and definitely no later than 72 hours (3 days) after exposure to HIV. The sooner treatment is started, the more likely it is to work.

PEP is a month-long course of drugs. The drugs are the same drugs that are used by people with HIV. They need to be taken strictly according to their dosing schedules. Sometimes drugs used for PEP have unpleasant side-effects (e.g. nausea, diarrhoea) but these are temporary.

PEP is available from some hospitals and clinics. To find out where PEP is available call your local AIDS Council (pages 30-32) or a sexual health clinic.

When you ask for PEP, the doctor or nurse will ask you what happened to make you think you need it: they're not judging you, they simply need to know what happened so they can determine how likely it is that you have actually been exposed to HIV.

For more information

Go to <http://www.getpep.info>



STIs (sexually transmissible infections)

STIs (sexually transmissible infections) are viruses, bacteria and parasites that are passed between people during sex. Some, like syphilis, can cause serious damage to your health if left untreated.

From the mid-1980s, when gay men started using condoms on a widespread scale, the rate of other STIs such as syphilis and gonorrhoea fell dramatically. As a result, many gay men stopped getting regular sexual health checks apart from HIV tests. However, since the late-1990s the rate of STIs has been increasing.

Getting a sexual health check is easy and painless, and most STIs are easily treated.

Not all STIs show symptoms, or they may be so mild that you don't notice them. So you could have an STI (and be passing it on to your sex partners) without knowing it.

STIs and HIV

For HIV-negative men, having an STI increases the risk of getting HIV because the cells of the immune system are attracted to the site of STIs, and it is these cells that HIV targets.

For HIV-positive men, STIs in the urethra can increase levels of HIV in cum and pre-cum. This makes passing on HIV more likely if you are fucking without a condom.

Also, an inflammatory STI (chlamydia or gonorrhoea) or an ulcerative STI (herpes or syphilis) increases the risk of

passing on HIV because the virus is more concentrated at the site of infections.

HIV-positive men need to be particularly vigilant about STIs. This is because some STIs act differently in people with HIV, HIV makes some STIs more difficult to treat, and some STIs can accelerate the progress of HIV.

The more sex partners you have, the more often you should get a sexual health check. All men should get a sexual health check at least annually.

An STI test can be done regardless of whether you have symptoms or not. A rectal or throat swab will be taken to test for chlamydia and gonorrhoea. A swab looks like a long cotton bud. You will need to provide a urine sample to test for chlamydia and gonorrhoea in the urethra (your cock). A blood sample is taken to test for viruses such as hepatitis A, B and C, and for syphilis, which is a bacterial infection. Your doctor should tell you what you are being tested for. Test results will usually take at least seven to ten days to come back and you will need to make another appointment to receive these results in person.

For more information

Go to <http://www.thedramadownunder.info>



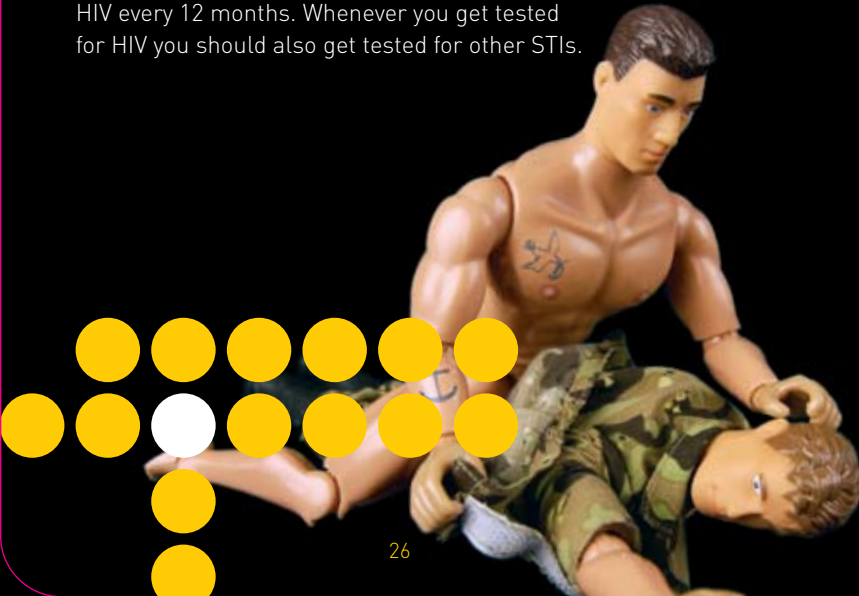
HIV testing

What is an HIV test?

An HIV test actually detects antibodies to HIV, rather than testing for the virus itself. Antibodies are the immune system's response to HIV. Antibodies develop a few weeks after HIV infection. During this time (called the 'window period') a person may get a negative HIV test result, even though they are infected with HIV and can infect others by fucking without condoms or sharing needles.

How often should I get tested?

All men who have sex with men should be tested for HIV every 12 months. Whenever you get tested for HIV you should also get tested for other STIs.



Where to get tested?

You can get tested by any GP (general practitioner) but many men prefer to go to a sexual health centre or gay-friendly clinic. Sexual health centres provide anonymous HIV testing. HIV testing in sexual health centres or gay clinics is also more likely to be available free-of-charge.

Having the test

Before having an HIV test you will need to have a face-to-face discussion with a doctor, nurse or counsellor. This discussion will cover:

- what the test is for;
- what it would mean if the result is positive;
- what it would mean if the result is negative;
- safe sex and safe injecting;
- how to get support while you wait for your test results.

Results

Results take about one week. You will be required to receive the test result in person. The person who gives you your result will discuss with you the meaning of the result. This includes:

- how being HIV positive will affect you; or
- how to stay HIV negative.

For more information

Go to <http://www.afao.org.au/testing>

HIV prevention of the future

Vaccines

There are many trials going on around the world but development of an HIV vaccine has proven much more difficult than expected.

Microbicides

A microbicide is gel, cream, or film that can kill or neutralise viruses and bacteria. When applied directly in the rectum or vagina before sex, a microbicide would either kill HIV and other STIs directly, or prevent them from entering the body. Unlike condoms, a microbicide could be used without a sexual partner's knowledge. There are currently several microbicides in large-scale trials with results expected between 2008 and 2010.

So far trials have only been conducted to see if these products are safe. It is likely that an effective vaginal microbicide to protect against HIV will be available long before a rectal microbicide.

Pre-exposure prophylaxis

Another experimental HIV prevention strategy is one in which people who are HIV negative would take anti-HIV drugs *on an ongoing basis* to prevent HIV infection. This approach has not yet been proven. Safety trials have now been conducted to prove that these drugs are not harmful to people who are HIV

negative. However, not much is known about the long-term use of these drugs.

A trial to test the effectiveness of this intervention as a way of preventing HIV is currently being conducted among gay men in Peru.

For more information

Go to:

<http://avac.org/vaccines.htm>

<http://www.microbicide.org>

<http://www.global-campaign.org/>

<http://www.prepwatch.org/>



Contacts

AIDS Councils

Local AIDS councils produce HIV information and education materials as well as provide a range of services. These include counselling, peer education and support, needle and syringe exchange, and HIV health maintenance. AIDS Councils can also give you information about local services related to HIV and sexual health.

Australian Capital Territory

AIDS Action Council of the ACT
02 6257 2855
www.aidsaction.org.au

New South Wales

ACON (AIDS Council of New South Wales)
02 9206 2000
www.acon.org.au
TTY 02 9283 2088
Freecall 1800 063 060

Hunter Newcastle 02 4927 6808
Illawarra Wollongong 02 4226 1163
Mid North Coast Port Macquarie 02 6584 0943
Northern Rivers Lismore 02 6622 1555
Positive Living Centre Sydney 02 9699 8756

Northern Territory

Northern Territory AIDS and Hepatitis Council
Darwin 08 8941 1711
Freecall 1800 880 899
Alice Springs 08 8953 3172

Queensland

Queensland Association for Healthy Communities
Brisbane and South East Qld 07 3017 1777
Men's Line Freecall 1800 155 141
North Queensland 07 4041 5451
Central Queensland 07 5451 1118
www.qahc.org.au

South Australia

AIDS Council of South Australia
08 8334 1611
Freecall 1800 880 899
www.acsa.org.au

Tasmania

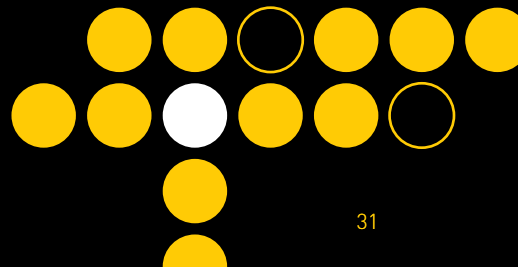
Tasmanian Council on AIDS,
Hepatitis and Related Diseases
03 6234 1242
Freecall 1800 005 900
www.tascahd.org.au

Victoria

Victorian AIDS Council / Gay Men's Health Centre 03 9865 6700
Freecall 1800 134 840
TTY 03 9827 3733
www.vicaids.asn.au

Western Australia

Western Australian AIDS Council
08 9482 0000
www.wa aids.com



PLWHA Organisations

Specific organisations exist in most states and territories to represent the interests of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). These organisations run support groups for people with HIV (including groups for the recently diagnosed) as well as provide other services such as HIV treatments information, and advocacy.

Australian Capital Territory

PLWHA ACT 02 6257 4985
www.aidsaction.org.au/plwha

New South Wales

PLWHA NSW 02 9361 6011
Freecall 1800 245 677 www.plwha.org.au

Northern Territory

PLWHA NT 08 8941 1711
Freecall 1800 880 899

Queensland

Queensland Positive People
Statewide Resource Centre 07 3013 5555
Freecall 1800 636 241 www.qpp.org.au

South Australia

PLWHA SA 08 8293 3700
www.hivsa.org.au

Positive Living Centre 08 8293 3700

Tasmania

(TasCAHRD) 03 6234 1242
www.tascahrd.org.au

Victoria

PLWHA Victoria 03 9865 6772
www.plwhavictoria.org.au

Western Australia

HAPAN 08 9482 0000

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