

## About AFAO

**Established** in 1986 to represent Australian HIV community based organisations at the national level.

### Membership

- State & Territory AIDS Councils (AAACT, ACON, ACSA, NTAC, QuAC, TasCAHRD, VAC, WAAC)
- National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS (NAPWA)
- Australian Injecting and Illicit Drugs Users League (AIVL)
- Scarlet Alliance (the national forum for Australian sex worker organisations)

### Thank you!

AFAO would like to thank the following people for their support over the past year.

- Blue Rock (for keeping us supplied with good coffees)
- Richard Byrne Catering (for feeding everyone at our meetings)
- Mark Clapham (for his negotiations on our new building lease)

### Sponsors

- Mallesons (for their continued pro bono legal work)
- Surry National Stationery (for their in kind donation of stationery)

MALLESONS STEPHEN JAQUES



### AFAO's work focuses on

- HIV policy advice to national government and community
- Representing our Members and the community sector on all national HIV policy-making and advisory bodies
- HIV prevention and positive education and health promotion campaigns – particularly innovative approaches – with homosexually-active men and people with living with HIV/AIDS
- Work with Indigenous communities with a focus on HIV and sexual health with gay men and transgender/sistergirls
- Developing and advocating strategic policy responses and interventions at the international level with a particular focus on the Asia Pacific region
- Assisting community groups and regional non-government organisation networks in the Asia Pacific region
- Supporting the ethical development and trialling of vaccines as a partner in the Australian Vaccine Initiative (funded by US National Institutes of Health (NIH))

Our funding is chiefly from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. Other sources include the US National Institutes of Health and private donations.

AFAO employs around 20 people in full time and part time positions in its offices in Sydney's Surry Hills (moving to Newtown in November 2002) and shares these offices with NAPWA.

## National President's Report

Bill Whittaker



**AFAO** and our Member organisations have worked in a particularly difficult environment during the past 12 months. Changes to a set of factors that shape the epidemic in Australia have created new complexities for our work and new challenges for the future. These factors include:

- Rises in new HIV infections in several comparable settings overseas, together with epidemiological and behavioural data in Australia indicating an increased vulnerability to new HIV infections,
- A rise in new HIV infections in Victoria, sustained through 2000 and 2001,
- A more complicated environment for the delivery of HIV prevention and health promotion, especially among men who have sex with men and injecting drug users,
- Eroding support in some quarters for harm reduction approaches, particularly needle and syringe programs,
- An increasingly moribund National HIV/AIDS Strategy, characterised by an ineffective advisory structure; the failed experiment of combining HIV and Hepatitis C policy formulation; and ineffective HIV funding and program accountability mechanisms,
- Continuing uncertainty over the future organisation and funding of Australian HIV/AIDS research,
- A difficult set of issues associated with HIV antiretroviral treatments, including emerging toxicities; drug resistance and cross resistance; and a resultant shift from earlier to deferred treatment, and
- Increasing costs and overheads for community based organisations at a time of static or declining funding, combined with increased demand for our services and greater complexity in our work.

These challenges have occurred as HIV continues to spread relentlessly in many parts of the world. Worldwide HIV infections are now over 40 million, with 14,000 people becoming newly infected every day. HIV infections in the Asia Pacific region have already reached eight million, with predictions that our region will become the epicentre of the epidemic by the end of this decade. The global pandemic has never been more threatening. As well as the immense grief and loss caused, the world also faces economic and political destabilisation in a number of countries.

**AFAO and our Members continue to show leadership, determination and innovation in the fight against HIV/AIDS.**

However there have been some encouraging signs of growing global determination to do more to fight HIV/AIDS. The United Nations Special Session on HIV/AIDS in 2001 and the 12th World AIDS Conference in Barcelona in 2002 provided important focal points for this. The challenge now is to maintain that momentum.

Despite this very difficult environment and the complex challenges ahead, AFAO and our Members continue to show leadership, determination and innovation in the fight against HIV/AIDS. I am pleased to report that the achievements of AFAO and our Members over the past 12 months have been considerable – and are documented throughout this report.

We set out to revive Australia's National HIV/AIDS Strategy, working closely with the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, colleagues in the community sector, and other health professionals and researchers working in HIV. Commonwealth Health Minister Senator Kay Patterson and her predecessor, Dr Michael Wooldridge, have also been supportive of moves to strengthen Australia's HIV response through a comprehensive review of the 4th National HIV/AIDS Strategy, as proposed by AFAO. That Review is nearing completion and substantial changes appear likely to be proposed. Translating those proposals into a re-invigorated national effort will be a key challenge for AFAO, our Members, and all involved in HIV/AIDS in Australia over the next 12 months.

The burgeoning global and regional epidemic has necessarily, and appropriately, meant that AFAO and our Members have had to contribute more to regional and international efforts. Despite very limited resources, we have managed to make important contributions, particularly to policy and strategy related to regional and global responses.

Internally, we have further streamlined the governance of AFAO. Changes that formally devolved responsibility for the operation of AFAO from a large committee of Members to a smaller elected Board are operating smoothly. The Board has settled into an effective working pattern of six face to face meetings a year, supplemented by fixed purpose and time limited working groups on particular issues. I want to express my warm thanks to all AFAO Board members for their patience, goodwill, enthusiasm and many hours of hard work. Particular thanks to vice-president Ben Harris for his efforts, including the periods where he most capably acted as president during the year.

AFAO has continued to strengthen its policy, program and financial management capacity over the past year. The Statement of Directions (2000–2004) adopted by the membership 24 months ago, continues to guide AFAO's work. Much of this work, as with the day-to-day operation of AFAO, is carried out by the AFAO staff team. I am proud of the dedicated, professional way staff have approached their work over the past year. The achievements described in this report are a tribute to them.

A most notable achievement for AFAO over the past year has been the seamless transition from outgoing Executive Director, Robin Gorna, to her successor, Don Baxter. Robin left the organisation in excellent shape, with markedly increased capacity in policy, advocacy and program work. Don is building the organisation's capacity even further through his exceptional dedication and formidable array of skills. Both Robin and Don have provided exemplary support and guidance to the Board. Certainly as president, I have felt extremely fortunate to be given the opportunity to work with these two outstanding professionals during the past 12 months. ■

## Executive Director's Report

**Don Baxter** (from Dec. 2001–present); **Robin Gorna** (until Nov. 2001)



**2001/2002** has seen major advances in all areas of AFAO's work. In *national policy and advocacy* AFAO took major steps towards the revitalisation of Australia's response to the HIV epidemic. In the *international and regional HIV epidemics* AFAO made some significant interventions to strengthen the Asia Pacific response at a time of disturbing confirmation of the exploding epidemic in the region. In *national health promotion around HIV* AFAO delivered two major campaigns, successful Indigenous and HIV educator's national conferences, a range of policy papers and interventions and completed the national training project. *Internally*, we bedded down the governance, Member support and operational changes planned and developed over the last three years.

### National policy and advocacy

#### Revitalising Australia's national response to HIV/AIDS

Over the last three years AFAO and our Members' concerns have been growing over the loss of direction, energy and apparent commitment to maintaining a vigorous and effective response to the changing HIV epidemic.

At our meeting in February with the new Minister for Health and Ageing, Senator Kay Patterson, we urged her to commission a full review of Australia's response to HIV and we were pleased she decided to instigate such a Review.

AFAO's two major submissions to the Review have been widely praised and appear to have been influential in the deliberations of the Review Teams. The final report is expected in October 2002. We also provided considerable support to other stakeholders in framing their arguments and submissions to the Reviews.

Over the last three years  
AFAO and our Members'  
concerns have been growing  
over the loss of direction,  
energy and apparent  
commitment to maintaining a  
vigorous and effective  
response to the changing  
HIV epidemic.

#### Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) & welfare reform

Reviews of the national strategies required intense focus but we managed to maintain extensive, high-quality input to emerging policy issues during the year. The government's Budget for 2002/2003 foreshadowed increased charges for PBS items and significant changes to the Disability Support Pension (DSP) as part of a package of welfare reforms. Both changes had the potential for serious negative impact on people living with HIV/AIDS.

AFAO undertook intense advocacy on both issues which contributed to the Senate refusing to pass them. In June, we lodged a submission on the PBS to the government's subsequently created Interdepartmental Committee on the PBS and worked with a range of other community-sector bodies, particularly NAPWA, the Cancer Council of NSW and the Consumers' Health Forum, in monitoring developments and proposals in this area. Similarly, with NAPWA we worked jointly with ACOSS and its constituent members on the DSP legislation and subsequent revisions proposed by the government.

#### A 'Sexual Health Strategy'?

2001 saw a loose and somewhat erratic debate emerge on the desirability of a 'Sexual Health Strategy'. To help focus debate AFAO produced a comprehensive Discussion Paper. This proved timely as it clarified both our Member's thinking and that of others in considering the positions that should be put in submissions to the Review of the National Strategies. Our call for a 'Sexually transmitted infections strategy' to be developed over the life of a 5<sup>th</sup> National HIV/AIDS Strategy has been widely supported.

Through the year, AFAO produced submissions and provided advice to a range of other government and non-government bodies. A listing of these is included in the Policy section of this report. AFAO continued to brief its nominees on the wide range of policy, advisory and decision-making bodies to which we appoint representatives to ensure input from the community-sector remains at an effectively high level.

#### Media strategy and interventions

Media coverage and response is an important tool in our advocacy. From January 2002 we developed a clearer strategic approach, intended to shape media opportunities to illustrate the growing deficiencies in Australia's overall response to HIV. The Norfolk Island proposals to ban people with HIV provided one such convenient opportunity and we have successfully managed to initiate or shape other media responses to this objective through the year.

#### The international HIV epidemic & Asia Pacific region work

While AFAO receives minimal government funding to undertake work internationally and in the Asia Pacific region, we were able to make a series of key strategic interventions in international and regional policies.

*continues >*

from previous page

### 6th ICAAP

AFAO played a key role in the 6th International Conference on AIDS in Asia & the Pacific (6th ICAAP) in Melbourne in October 2001 and its associated events. In particular, President Bill Whittaker's negotiations with Foreign Minister Alexander Downer were instrumental in ensuring funding for community-sector networks in the region and in influencing the associated Regional Ministerial statement on HIV/AIDS. Then Executive Director Robin Gorna's Co-Chairing of the ICAAP Conference Committee ensured an appropriate level of participation by the community-sector throughout the Conference.

### UNGASS follow-up

Following Bill Whittaker's participation in the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on HIV/AIDS earlier in 2001, Bill and AFAO have continued to propose mechanisms for the effective implementation of the UNGASS Declaration, ranging from the appointment of regional special envoys to assist the UN General Secretary, to a series of measures to assist community-sector organisations understand and use the Declaration to monitor and press their government's commitments.

### UNESCAP

AFAO has been liaising with the organisers of the Ministerial meeting of the UN Economic & Social Commission for Asia & the Pacific (UNESCAP) scheduled for April 2003 and has been assisting to foster whole-of-government responses with full participation by civil society within the region's countries.

### Other project and program work

Details of AFAO's program work in Fiji and Indonesia through our international grants scheme (funded by a private donor) and in the Vaccines Consortium Development program (Sydney and Bangkok) are set out in the International Policy and Projects section of this report.

At the national policy level,  
AFAO and our Members  
pursued investigation of the  
declining resources being  
allocated to gay and  
homosexually active men.

### Sustainability and directions of AFAO's international work

These activities have further secured AFAO's prominent role within Australia and, as subtly as possible, within the region. While most of this activity is policy and advocacy – and with much of it done voluntarily – this level of output is not sustainable without a reliable source of on-going funding to resource it. Attaining such a revenue stream is a priority issue for AFAO in 2002/2003.

In the last 12 months, there has been a major shift in the HIV environment. The international and regional epidemics have proven to be burgeoning rather than stabilising, treatments access is emerging as a realistic possibility and therefore a high priority in the region, and there has been a major shift in the mix of donors, available dollars and government approaches. In this context, in June we initiated a review of AFAO's international work in order to provide a clearer set of strategic directions for AFAO's future internal work.

### HIV education & health promotion: major national campaigns, policy and projects

AFAO continued to develop and deliver high quality HIV health promotion programs through 2001/2002. These become ever more critical with the effective reduction in funding to most of our Members by their state/territory funding agencies for this work – along with the increasingly complex environment in which these programs have to be developed. Two major campaigns, 'No Worries' and [www.sexinqueerplaces.com](http://www.sexinqueerplaces.com), were produced. These, along with a range of other resources, are detailed in the AFAO/NAPWA Education Team (ANET) section of this report.

AFAO continues to provide leadership in and to facilitate the development of health promotion, education and community development policy through the Education Strategies Group and the ANET Steering Group and Team. We conducted two major conferences – the 3<sup>rd</sup> Anwernekenhe Conference for Indigenous gay men and sisters and the 7<sup>th</sup> HIV Educators Conference.

At the national policy level, AFAO and our Members pursued investigation of the declining resources being allocated to gay and homosexually active men, albeit with frustratingly slow progress, and produced a policy discussion paper on increases in unprotected anal intercourse and a comprehensive paper on HIV positive education.

The year also saw the completion of work providing the basis for development of a three-year strategic plan for the ANET Team and program. This included the Gay Men's Education Consultation (a review of activities and issues in all states and territories), an independent evaluation of ANET's work and recommendations from the HIV Educators Conference. The three-year plan will be completed by the end of 2002.

The National Training Agenda project was completed and pilot tested. This program, three years in development, can now provide ongoing opportunities for the HIV community sector to strengthen and recognise the competencies of its workforce and assist staff to develop their skills and enhance their career prospects.

continues >

from previous page

## **AFAO's internal operations**

### **Governance and strategy**

2001/2002 saw the consolidation and full implementation of a series of governance, systems and operational changes which have been in planning and development over the last three years. As the President's report indicates, the AFAO Board structure is operating very smoothly and productively. The range and quality of achievements for this year attests to the productive state of relations between the Board, management, staff and our Membership.

AFAO's work continues to be guided by our strategic plan, articulated in 'Statement of Directions 2000/2004'. While we had expected to conduct a mid-term review in early 2002 the Board decided to delay this review until the outcomes of the Reviews of the National Strategies are clear.

### **Policy development processes adjusted**

Our policy development processes have been adjusted to improve input from the Board, staff and Member volunteers. This has been achieved through creating a series of policy working groups on emerging issues (e.g. PBS and Welfare reform) while retaining the major on-going policy advisory groups such as the NAPWA Treatments Policy Working Group, the Education Strategies Group and the International Advisory Group. Similarly, the foundations for our Indigenous work have been streamlined through the 3rd Anwernekenhe Conference establishing a new Indigenous Strategic Alliance to replace the previous Steering Committee structure. The success of this transition is already providing renewed energy and support for AFAO's Indigenous project and for those of our Members.

### **Communications and services for Members**

Communications with and services for our Members have been improved during the year. Some simple internal measures were put in place to make AFAO staff more directly accessible and work on upgrading our website to ensure its effective use as a key communication tool and information resource took major steps forward. Our handling of bookings for Members' travel and accommodation for AFAO meetings also eased Members' workloads and increased savings in these budget lines.

### **Management Team consolidated**

The AFAO Management Team, fully established in August 2001, has consolidated very well with high levels of trust, productivity and humour – both within the team and among the staff. AFAO is essentially a "creative ideas and analysis" organisation. Given this, management's key challenge is to ensure output is actually completed and delivered. I am pleased to say that Dermot Ryan, Mark Bebbington and Tim Childs strike the right balance in fostering creativity and discussion yet ensuring output is produced and outcomes achieved.

### **Financial systems overhaul completed**

The complete overhaul of our financial systems is now complete. Both the Board and Management Team are now confident the budgeting, accounting, monitoring and forecasting procedures in

place are providing the most accurate and transparent financial data the organisation has had. The range of measures introduced is detailed in Tim Childs's report on the Organisational & Member Services (OMS) Team. That AFAO budgeted for and achieved a small surplus for 2001/2002 is a tribute to both the systems introduced and to Tim's rigour in implementing them effectively.

### **Industrial relations**

A range of staff industrial issues have been resolved. These include:

- the development of a Performance Development System for all staff (in trial through 2002/2003),
- resolution of some outstanding FBT and staff leave issues,
- full implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on Job Classifications and Salary Levels between staff and management, and
- a review of supervision practice and development and adoption of a Supervision Policy.

Resolution of these issues has allowed our highly creative staff to improve focus on their work rather than the aggravation and distraction which arises from these matters.

### **AFAO's budget**

But now, the bad news. AFAO's budget is under severe strain. Like many in the HIV sector and community sector generally, AFAO is suffering from the pincer movement of static or declining revenues from our chief funding agencies while our costs are steadily increasing – but with expectations of similar product output. We have already been forced to make the reception position and a part-time policy position redundant. The prospects are not bright for the future unless alternative revenue streams, particularly those allowing some discretion of allocation, can be established.

Within the Commonwealth sphere this crunch is intensified by a Department-wide tightening of project contractual arrangements – arguably a highly inappropriate model for the on-going nature of AFAO's education and policy operations in any case. This is significantly reducing AFAO's capacity for any flexibility in addressing emerging issues in the epidemic.

These matters will be taken up fully in a joint Department/AFAO 'Review of AFAO', the first in 10 years, in early 2003. The impacts of these moves may well be a topic for discussion at the Annual General Meeting. Board and management will be working on alternative revenue streams through 2002/2003.

### **Finally ...**

... on a personal note: the first six months in the job have been both exhausting and exhilarating. With an excellent Board, talented staff, supportive Members – and tantalising challenges – moving to AFAO is the best career move I could have made. ■

*Don Baxter*

**Executive Director**

## AFAO/NAPWA Education Team (ANET) and Indigenous Team

Dermot Ryan



**The** last 12 months have been a busy and productive time for ANET with our activities divided between campaign and resource production, strengthening the Membership capacity to respond to the current demands of the epidemic and producing policy positions that assist the sector in meeting the goals of future challenges of HIV education and health promotion.

### Campaign and resource development

[www.sexinqueerplaces.com](http://www.sexinqueerplaces.com)

In the area of campaign and resource development a major activity undertaken by ANET this year was the development of an Internet-based campaign for gay men. Using multimedia technology including animation, audio and interactivity, this is ANET's first campaign that has been designed specifically for the Internet.

The campaign can be understood as 'interactive education and entertainment'. The aim of the campaign is to engage people through the use of humour, attractive homoerotic art and design and intelligent structuring of interactive elements in order to give site users a sense of control over the experience. The campaign addresses issues relating to casual sex and recreational drug use in four contexts – dance parties, sex-on-premises venues, beats and online cruising. Information is presented in various formats, using the unique opportunities afforded by the medium to structure and layer information. The campaign was launched in Queensland in June 2002 and will be released in stages across the country. Internet-based promotion activities and other electronic strategies are just some innovative approaches that have been developed by members of the Implementation Group.

### No Worries

*No Worries* is a Q & A based campaign tackling the risk reduction strategies used by gay men in sexual decision-making. After the successful policy shift in 2001 to adopting risk reduction strategies in gay men's prevention education, ANET developed a campaign for use within the Membership that directly addresses this issue in the lived cultural experience of gay men. Almost all education campaigns to date have focused on minimising occasions of unprotected sex between men of different HIV status – but very few (with the notable exception of campaigns on "withdrawal") have addressed individual risk reduction strategies employed by some gay men in relation to unprotected anal sex. In addition, it is becoming clear that new treatments and medical technologies are having an impact on risk assessment and sexual practice. All of these areas were addressed in the campaign.

The campaign dealt with the issues raised through recent qualitative and quantitative research regarding the development of individually tailored risk minimisation strategies for anal sex. The campaign specifically addresses four key areas:

- Insertive/receptive roles for anal sex (perceptions of and risk minimisation strategies based on relative risk of HIV as the receptive or insertive partner with a known positive partner or one of unknown status)
- Viral load (knowledge of viral load and its role in decisions around condom use)

- Withdrawal
- Assumptions about (and disclosure of) HIV status in casual sexual situations

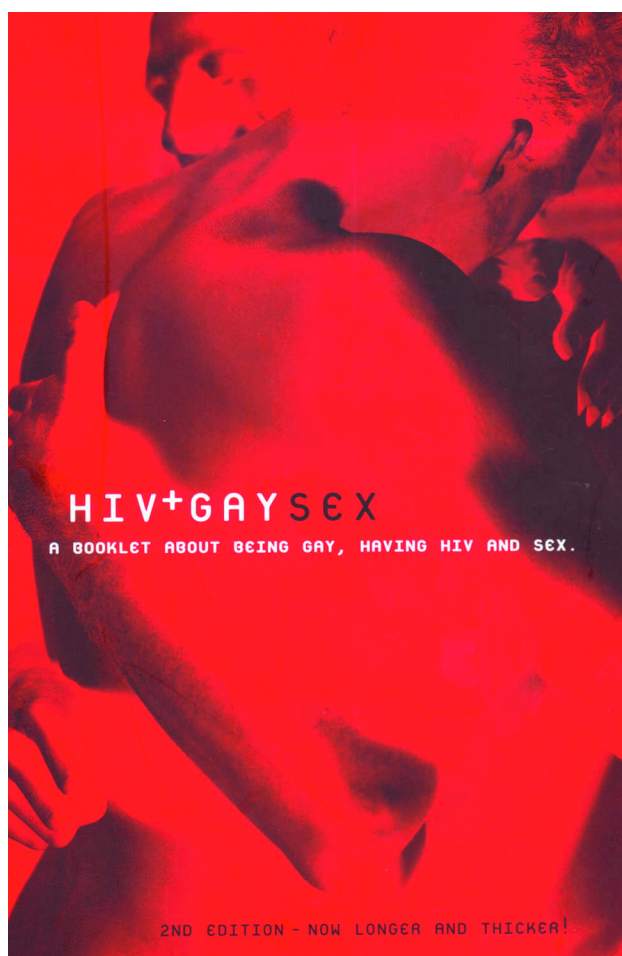
Four posters were produced along with a small booklet and a range of discussion papers providing educators with in-depth information on all four specific areas. The campaign has been implemented in most states and territories.

### HIV+ Gay Sex

ANET completed the development of the second edition of this booklet this year. The booklet was substantially rewritten to address current issues among HIV positive gay men in relation to sex, relationships, discrimination, disclosure, support, HIV treatments and more.

### Q&A opportunistic infections and conditions in the antiviral age

A new booklet describing opportunistic illnesses, how positive people are placed at risk of them, what the symptoms are, diagnoses and treatment has been produced and distributed. The booklet covers viral infections, cancers and lymphomas, fungal, bacterial and protozoal infections, as well as providing a complete, easy to digest guide to HIV and the immune system.



The HIV+ Gay Sex Booklet

*continues >*

from previous page

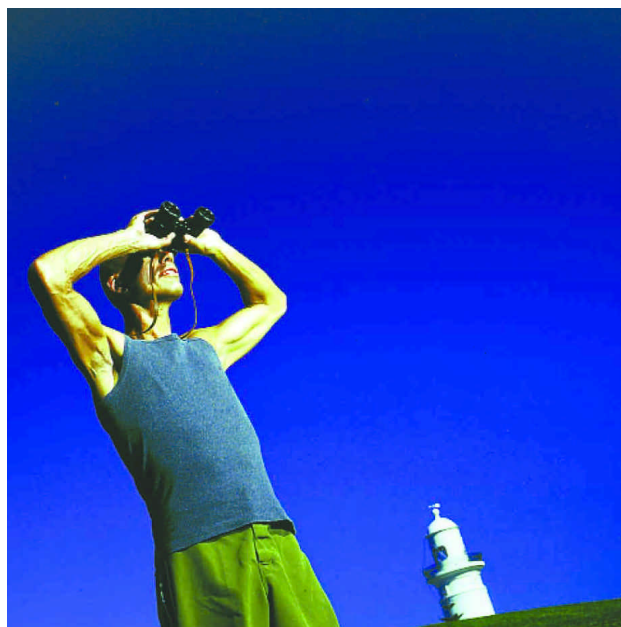
### Short Breaks and Dangerous Liaisons

These two leaflets for HIV positive people looking at recreational drugs, short treatment breaks and drug interactions were rewritten and reprinted this year.

### Positive Living (PL)

PL continues to deliver high quality information on treatments and lifestyle issues of relevance to HIV positive people. Key highlights throughout the year include an editorial review resulting in a refocus of PL as a news based publication, strengthening the voice of positive people throughout the publication and the development of a draft editorial policy. In 2002 AFAO and NAPWA commenced negotiations to transfer the publication to NAPWA. These negotiations will be completed by the end of the year. In addition to its regular production schedule, the publication also underwent a change in editorial staff and continues to receive positive feedback from services and individuals.

'Tomorrow' from the Everyday Pleasures campaign



### Works in development

Often the ANET team undertakes large projects in which their development and implementation spans over more than one year. In this year work has commenced on two large projects – the 'HIV Survival Guide' and the 'Treatment Breaks Campaign'. These two innovative projects target HIV positive people and reflect the changes adopted in ANET in early 2001. These changes ensure that HIV positive based projects reflect the lived experience of HIV positive people and not just their interaction with treatments. It is expected that these projects will be released later in 2002.

### Capacity development

ANET has continued to focus its work on strengthening Membership capacity through expanding the Education Strategies Group (ESG) to more broadly represent the interests of PLWHA organisations undertaking educational work.

In May 2002 ANET successfully co-hosted the 7th National HIV Educators Conference, "Changing Risks Changing Communities". The conference was attended by over 160 delegates with funding from AIDS Trust Australia assisting with the travel costs for some delegates. The conference covered issues such as:

- Emerging and changing technologies and the Internet as a new and emerging space for HIV education
- The changing nature of risk
- Developments in HIV education targeting positive people
- HIV and young people
- The notion of engagement with affected communities

The conference was an outstanding success a range of recommendations were made for ANET and HIV educators generally.

Other activities in the area of capacity development have included the establishment of implementation groups, which have proved highly successful in providing better support and coordination in the implementation of ANET campaigns and resources. The groups include representatives from AIDS Councils and/or PLWHAs group in each state.

### Education policy development

During the past financial year, ANET has taken a lead role in the area of HIV/AIDS education policy. Some of the topics include:

- Unprotected Anal Intercourse (UAI) addressed at the Intergovernmental Committee on AIDS, Hepatitis and Related Diseases (IGCAHRD) meeting in February after the release of a paper on bare backing.
- Pos Ed which included the production of a major discussion document on positive education as a follow up to our institute in January 2001 covering changes in treatments, the growing awareness of long term drug toxicities, changed treatment guidelines and diminished use of community organisations by positive clients.
- A discussion paper on HIV testing issues.
- Mapping of HIV prevention programs on the ground nationally in consultation with the Education Strategy Group. It is planned that this issue will continue with benchmarking in the coming year.

A range of significant projects and reports were also completed this year. Two of these reports were the 'Having an Impact', ANET's evaluation project report and 'All Things Considered' the gay education consultation report. The recommendations from these reports, along with other relevant reports and recommendations from the HIV educators conference will be used in the development of the ANET Strategic Plan, due for release later this year.

During the year there were some staffing changes in the ANET team. Peter Canavan joined the team in the role of HIV Educator Capacity Development and Ross Duffin returned to AFAO in the position of HIV Educator Campaign and Resource Development/Positive Education. Russell Westacott left AFAO to take up a position at GMHC New York and we wish him all the best.

continues >

from previous page

### **National Training Agenda (Phase 2)**

2002 saw the successful completion of the implementation phase of the National Training Agenda (NTA) Project. The project, which was extended in June 2001, aimed to nationally implement the customised Certificate IV and Diploma in Community Services (Community Work) qualifications (developed and customised in Phase 1 of the project). The implementation phase included the workplace-based assessment of 49 HIV/AIDS educators to determine current competencies and competency gaps of educators using the 'Customised competency standards for HIV/AIDS educators' as benchmarks. This process was undertaken in partnership with a Registered Training Organisation, Centre for Personal Education, (COPE), as required by Commonwealth regulations. Of the 49 participants eight were trained as workplace assessors in April after an independent application process. In May, the workplace assessors, all of who were assessed and obtained their qualifications in the Diploma in Community Services (Community Work) commenced the assessment of the remaining 41 educators. All participants successful attained their qualifications in either the Certificate IV or Diploma.

A final report and sustainability strategy for the NTA has now been completed. It recommends that AFAO continue to prioritise the training, development and support needs of HIV educators in the sector. ■

Crystal Johnson photographed by Tim Winbourne for HIV Australia



### **Indigenous Gay, Sistergirl & Transgender Project**

**O**ver the past year the Indigenous project has embarked on implementing 'A Changing Environment', which outlines AFAO's response to the review of the Indigenous Project. The response has been one of strategic realignment to meet the changing environment and emerging national issues.

Limited progress in the development of strategic alliances between AIDS Councils and Indigenous Community Controlled Health services has been pivotal in progressing a governance restructure to the Indigenous Gay & Transgender/Sistergirl Steering Committee. The move to what is now known as the Indigenous Strategic Alliance for HIV/AIDS – Sexual Health Promotion, places greater emphasis on advisory roles of the committee and working in collaboration with strategic stakeholders to respond to emerging issues. The new committee has moved away from geographical representation, to six Indigenous gay and sistergirl community portfolio positions and has invited other organisations such as NAPWA, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and Australasian Society for HIV Medicine onto the committee.

Anwernekenhe III took place in Melbourne from May 15 –17, adopting the theme 'Strengthening Communities Through Prevention, Peer Education and Partnerships'. The conference format was changed from previous Anwernekenhe forums by extending invitations to Indigenous and non-Indigenous HIV/AIDS and sexual health organisations and service providers, again ensuring strategic alliances are formed and progressed.

... the Indigenous Project is well placed to respond to current and future challenges.

The conference unanimously passed 28 recommendations, primarily targeted at AFAO Member organisations (AIDS Councils), National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and Office of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health. With the new Strategic Alliance now in place and equipped with these Anwernekenhe recommendations, the Indigenous Project is well placed to respond to current and future challenges. ■