

Sex in two cities

Gay men, risk and HIV in Perth and Sydney

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Funding

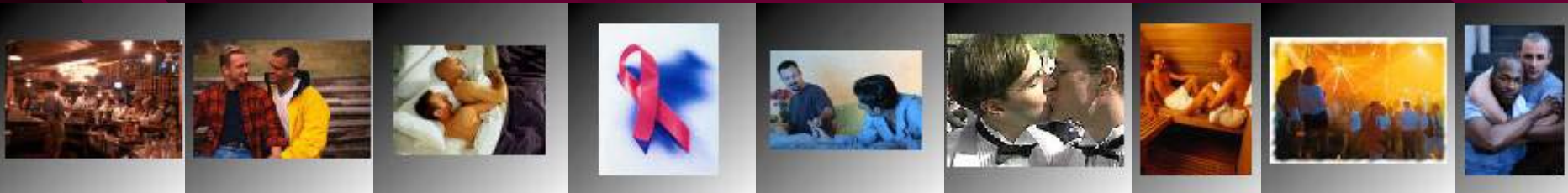
Sexual Health Program, Health Department of WA

In Kind Support

Western Australian AIDS Council

National Centre in HIV Social Research

National Centre in HIV Clinical and Epidemiological Research



Background

- HIV in the lives of many gay men, has moved from a panic driven crisis to day-to-day management and assimilation.
- However, how this plays out may vary across locations and settings.
- This paper investigates sexual negotiation and behaviour amongst gay men in Perth and Sydney, Australia
- It also reports on differences between sexual settings within Perth, based on qualitative research

Background

Gay Community Periodic Surveys

- Self administered anonymous questionnaire
- Cross sectional
- Recruitment during gay and lesbian festivals through community events and social and sexual venues
- High response rates (around 70%)

Background

Perth (Oct)

1998 - 846 men

2000 - 1035 men

2002 - 790 men

Sydney (Feb)

1999 - 2401 men

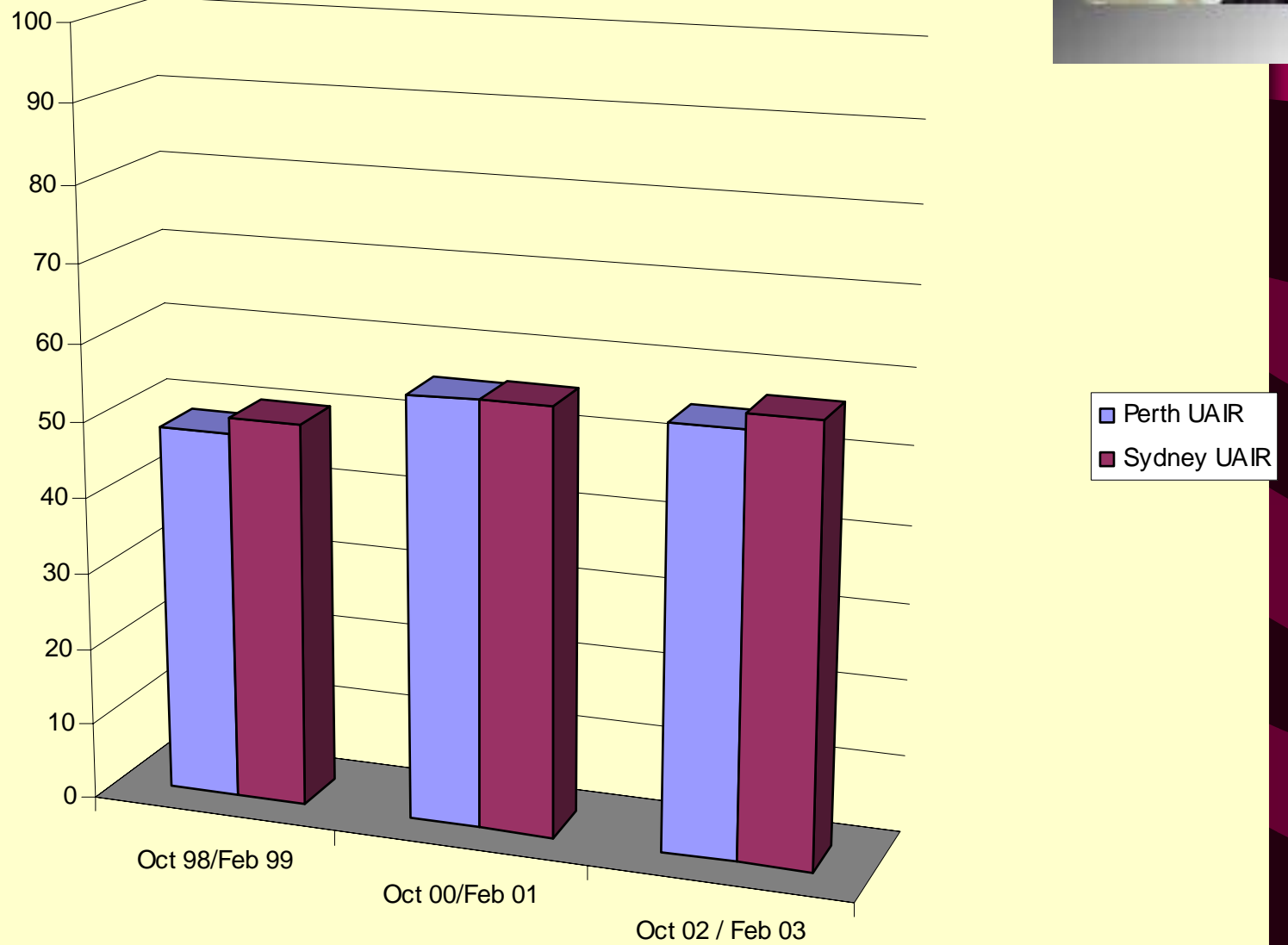
2001 - 2134 men

2003 - 1854 men

Sex with regular partners



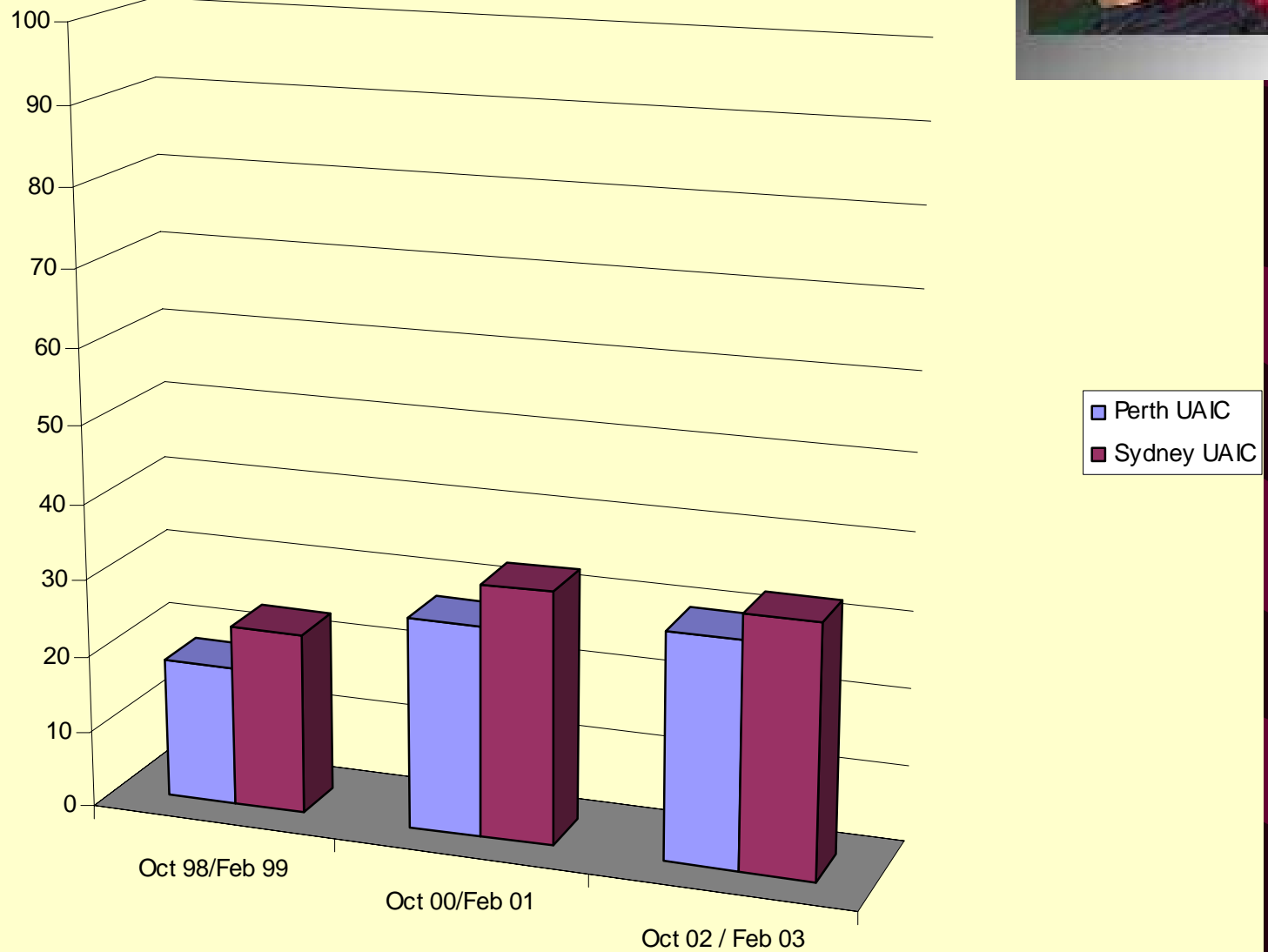
**% of
UAIR
amongst
men
with
regular
partners**



Sex with Casual Partners



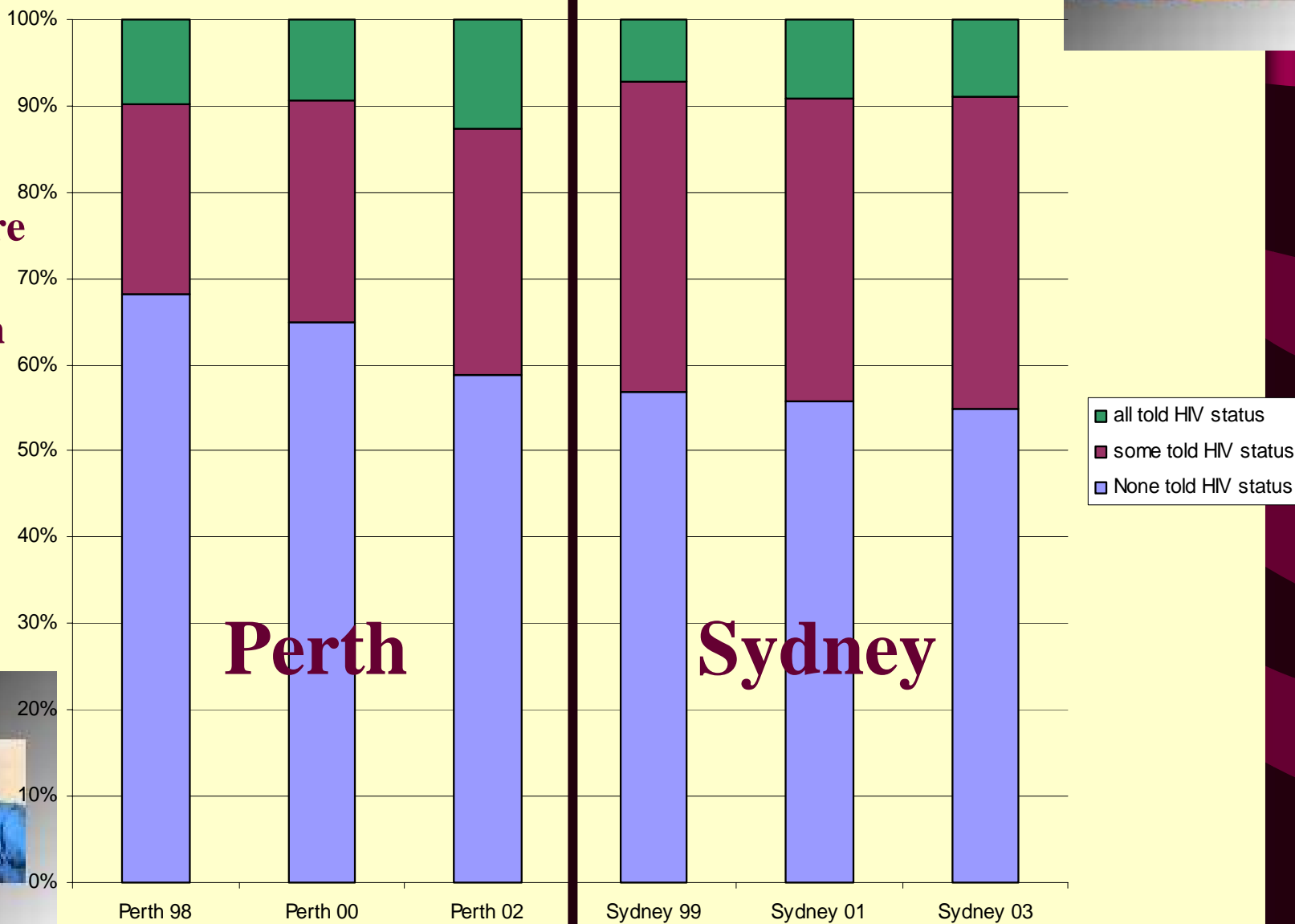
**% of
UAIC
amongst
men
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Disclosure of HIV



**Disclosure
amongst
men with
casual
partners**



Perth

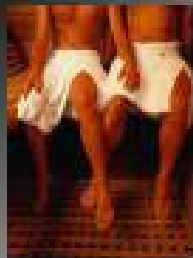
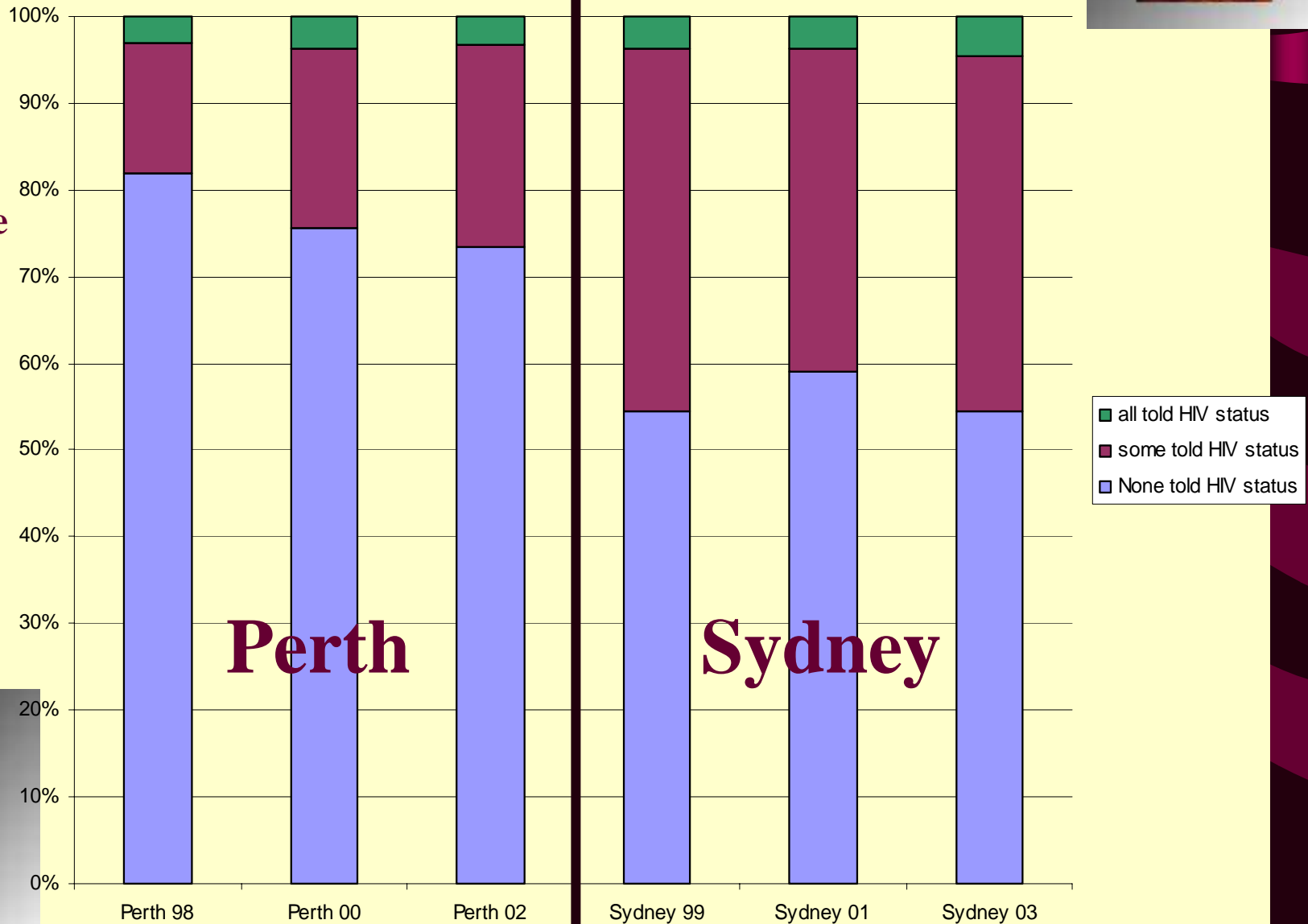
Sydney



Disclosure of HIV



Disclosure amongst men recruited from saunas



In depth interviews with Perth gay men

quantitative Perth Periodic Survey was concerned with identifying *what* trends in HIV related risk behaviour were occurring.

qualitative study was aimed at

- Describing *why* and *how* gay men behave as they do.
- Further investigate impact of setting and meaning

25 gay men of similar demographic, identity and age ranges as Perth Periodic Survey

Context, setting and meaning matters

‘The Scene’ – Different Spaces, Same Faces

- a safe, accepting and sexualised social environment made up of groups, tribes or cliques with high levels of familiarity;
- meanings, expectations and use was relative to what other environments the men accessed; and
- a place where there were multiple and changing reasons for being there.

Context, setting and meaning matters

Saunas were seen as having

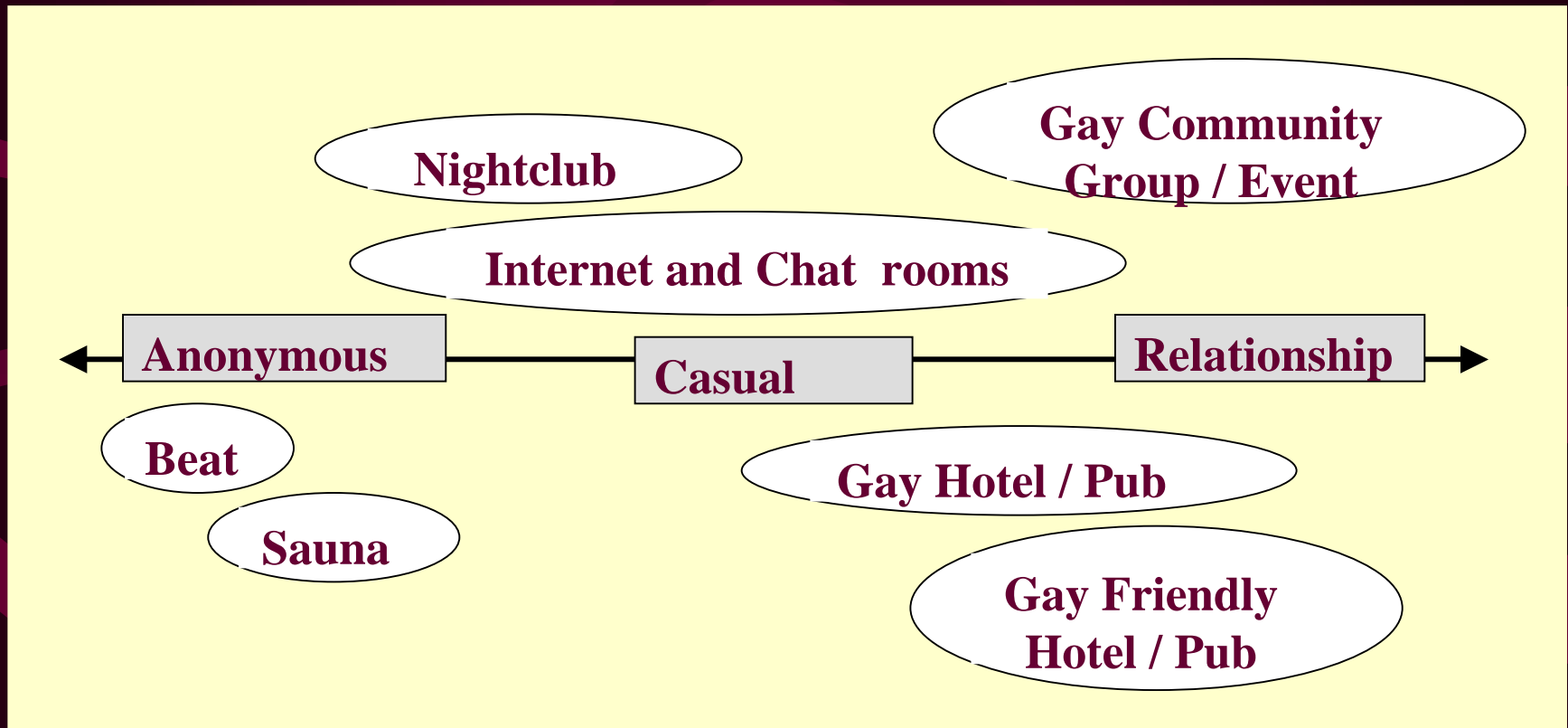
- clarity of purpose
- safe from the possible harms or risks of beats.
- strong meanings related to being a place to learn, initiate and 'pick it up',

Context, setting and meaning matters

Internet as

- a **variety of venues** with different purposes that act as **alternatives** to other more traditional venues;
- a **socialisation tool** for information, induction and building networks or friendships;
- a method of **control** over presentation of self and interaction through anonymity and discretion;
- an experience of **safety** generated through the online interaction prior to any meeting; and
- a source of novelty experiences, **entertainment** and escape.

Context, setting and meaning matters



Context, setting and meaning matters

- The way men engaged with men in spaces was influenced by what other spaces they used.
- Same men may have different scripts and assumptions in different spaces.
- Meanings for an individual within a space could change – but the meaning of space was resilient to change.

Context, setting and meaning matters

Conclusions

- negotiation of sexual behaviour and risk is inexorably linked to its context (location, venue, or situation).
- Programs need the capacity and policy support to:
 - Work with the subtle social and cultural differences between spaces;
 - work with the decision frameworks that are being used by gay men in these different situations;
 - recognise how these may change;
 - consider the benefits and risks of a possible reliance on a generic safe sex culture;

Context, setting and meaning matters

Conclusions

- negotiation of sexual behaviour and risk is inexorably linked to its context (location, venue, or situation).
- Programs need the capacity and policy support to:
- Focus on men accurately applying their knowledge of HIV transmission to the context, space and interaction experiences they are in...
- Not revert to simple, singular risk prevention messages that focus on the individual without considering that sexual experiences are a complex interaction between more than one person in a particular context.

Acknowledgements



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