



The Evaluation of the NSW HIV/AIDS Health Promotion Plan 2001-2003

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Background

NSW Health commissioned an independent evaluation of the NSW HIV/AIDS Health Promotion Plan 2001-2003.

The evaluation was part of a review of the *NSW HIV/AIDS Statement of Strategic Directions 2000-2003* which includes

- an assessment of HIV/AIDS care, support and treatment needs;
- review of the Resource Distribution Formula for AIDS Program funding; and
- an evaluation of the NSW HIV/AIDS Health Promotion Plan 2001-2003.

The Evaluation occurred in the context of a increase in HIV notifications in 2002/3.

NSW HIV/AIDS Health Promotion Plan 2001-2003

The Plan arose from the *NSW HIV/AIDS Statement of Strategic Directions 2000-2003* and has as its goals:

- to minimise the transmission of HIV in NSW;
- to enhance and maintain the health of HIV infected people, and
- to minimise the personal and social impact of HIV infection.

The Plan's objectives were:

- to improve the quality and effectiveness of health promotion interventions; and
- to enhance HIV/AIDS health promotion infrastructure.

The Plan's core principles were:

- partnership;
- non-partisanship;
- the central involvement of affected communities;
- the creation of an enabling environment; and
- harm minimisation.

Priority Target Populations

- gay and other homosexually active men;
- people with HIV/AIDS;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- injecting drug users; and
- sex workers

Overall the Plan directed the HIV/AIDS health promotion activities for the NSW Health system by drawing on social, behavioural and epidemiological research to identify priority areas for HIV/AIDS health promotion programming.

The Plan was widely disseminated across the sector through a series of implementation forums and was supported by a significant enhancement of funding for demonstration projects and social research.

Evaluation Process

An independent consortium conducted the evaluation, consisting of:

- Professor Andrew Wilson, University of Queensland (Principal Evaluator);
- Mr David Fowler;
- Mr Aldo Spina; and
- Ms Marilyn Wise, Australian Centre for Health Promotion, University of Sydney.

The NSW Health managed the project with the Ministerial Advisory Committee in AIDS Strategy (CAS) HP Sub-Committee overseeing the evaluation.

Evaluation

The goals of evaluation were to ensure:

- performance in achieving stated objectives and priorities of the Plan;
- accountability of services and programs;
- reviewed in light of best available evidence; and
- Provide accurate information on program performance.

Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation was divided into the following broad areas of work :

- process evaluation;
- impact evaluation;
- outcome evaluation;
- case studies; and
- recommendations for future HIV/AIDS Health Promotion strategic plans.

Methodology

The methodology for the evaluation included:

- review of research;
- review of project information;
- benchmarking outcomes against interstate and overseas jurisdictions;
- interviews with key stakeholders;
- consultation workshops;
- circulation of a discussion paper; and
- written submissions.

- Overall the Evaluation represents a comprehensive appraisal of the work of the HIV/AIDS health promotion program and the impact of the NSW HIV/AIDS Health Promotion Plan 2001-2003.
- It is the first evaluation of a NSW HIV/AIDS Health Promotion Plan and the first overall review of the NSW HIV/AIDS health promotion program.
- The findings provide both detailed and wide-ranging recommendations.

Key Findings

- Effective in focusing the NSW HIV/AIDS Health Promotion Program
- Enhanced the infrastructure necessary for effective programming
- Was well implemented
- Targeting high priority target populations was successful
- Infrastructure supporting health promotion programs is strong - gaps in evaluation.

- HIV diagnoses have fallen more than most other comparable jurisdictions. Due to high levels of engagement with the public health system.
- Interventions targeting UAIC among gay men have been neither more nor less effective than in comparable jurisdictions.
- The capacity of the needle and syringe program to respond to a large increase in injecting drug use probably averted an epidemic of HIV infection among injecting drug users.

- HIV among heterosexuals, sex workers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations HIV infection has remained low - experience from overseas indicates the need to prioritise strategies targeting CALD populations from high prevalence countries.
- The investment in HIV health promotion has been cost effective.

Key findings for programs targeting gay men

- Gay men are overwhelmingly aware that condoms are the most effective protection against HIV infection and campaigns have reinforced this knowledge;
- Recent interventions targeting UAIC have been neither more nor less effective than in comparable jurisdictions
- The relatively better performance of NSW is probably due to
 - higher levels of engagement with the health sector resulting in earlier diagnosis, higher treatment uptake,
 - increased HIV and STI testing rates and
 - a reduction of risk in the context of relationships

Key HP Recommendations

(Thirty three 33 in total)

- Continue to prioritise key population groups
- HIV prevention messages targeted at gay men should reinforce condom use as the only reliable means of HIV prevention during casual sex
- Sero-discordant relationships are a priority for the HIV/AIDS health promotion program
- Establish a state HIV/AIDS Campaign Interagency group
- Social marketing campaigns targeting gay men need to be strengthened

- Review health promotion projects targeted at people with HIV/AIDS
- Prioritise strategies targeting people from CALD backgrounds who come from countries with high prevalence epidemics
- Ensure a high level of PEP awareness among priority population groups
- Drug and alcohol use identified as a priority issue