

# SISTERGIRL



## *Keep yourself covered*

Costello, M / Johnson, C  
Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations

## *The Project*

**The National Indigenous Gay, Sistergirl & Transgender HIV/AIDS – Sexual Health Project** is a project of the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO)

Anwernekenhe, the first national gathering of Indigenous gay men and sistergirls affected by HIV/AIDS, was held in 1994. The Anwernekenhe forum made a range of recommendations for improving the national response to the epidemic. Among these was a recommendation that a project be established at AFAO to address the specific HIV/AIDS and sexual health needs of Indigenous gay men and sistergirls. A working party was established from the delegates to pursue the establishment of a project and other forum recommendations.

The Indigenous Project was established in 1996, under the auspices of the National Indigenous Gay, Sistergirl and Transgender Working Party, now known as the Indigenous Strategic Alliance. The Project undertook two years of national consultations, which was published as part of the AFAO Indigenous Gay and Transgender Project National Consultation Report and Sexual Health Strategy. This was the first work ever to consider specifically the experiences and sexual health needs of Australian Indigenous gay men and sistergirls.

The report and strategy continue to guide the projects activities, and activities of AFAO's members. Anwernekenhe forums are held periodically to enhance and progress Indigenous gay and sistergirl community responses.

AFAO, the National Indigenous Gay, Sistergirl & Transgender Strategic Alliance for HIV/AIDS & Sexual health promotion and the staff at AFAO Indigenous Gay and Sistergirl Project share a common goal:

To prevent the spread of HIV infection within Indigenous communities and to promote the best possible education and care for HIV positive Indigenous Australians.

To this end, AFAO promotes the work of the project and advocates for the project goals and achievements in public forums.

## *The Poster*

**Sistergirl – Keep yourself covered**, is a new national peer based resource that promotes positive self-esteem and incorporates essential HIV/AIDS and sexual health messages.

By promoting positive self-esteem the poster is also able to address underlying issues such as isolation and discrimination. The resource has also been designed to raise awareness of sistergirl identity within the broader HIV/AIDS and sexual health service provision area.

The AFAO National Indigenous Gay and Transgender Consultation Report and Sexual Health Strategy identified Indigenous Sistergirl and transgender communities a community experiencing high levels of discrimination and marginalisation.

The report highlighted low HIV/AIDS and sexual health awareness, low self-esteem and social isolation as prominent issues. Other issues confronting Sistergirl communities included high levels of sexual abuse, assault, rape, alcohol and substance abuse and prostitution, all of which can contribute to vulnerability to HIV infection.

The resource messages are based around safe sex and self/sexual partner empowerment to take control of safe sexual activities. Some of the messages underlying through imagery content include:

- Positive self esteem –vibrant identity
- Isolation - You are not alone
- Discrimination – Sistergirls contribute to and have a role to play in communities

The text-based messages are clear and direct. The text messages are purposefully designed to act as the voice of the target group and the messages is enhanced in value through the use of peer education principles.

i.e. **Sistergirls Say**. Messages also directly promote the use of condoms, i.e. **keep your-self covered** and **condoms protect us from HIV and most STI's**

### The poster aims are:

- To empower Indigenous sistergirl and transgender communities around positive self-esteem that in turn promotes individuals to engage in safer sexual practises
- To provide up to date and relevant sexual health information to the target audience.
- To assist service providers with greater awareness of Indigenous sistergirl and transgender communities in their delivery of services.

### The target audience are:

- Indigenous Sistergirl and Transgender communities
- Members of Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities who are likely to engage in sex with sistergirls
- HIV/AIDS and sexual health service provision and;
- Indigenous communities in general

