



POSITIVE LIFE NSW

# ANNUAL REPORT

2023 / 2024

The voice of all people living with HIV in NSW



## ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands on which Positive Life NSW operates from, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, and the traditional owners of all of the lands across NSW, and we pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.

We acknowledge the ongoing connection that Aboriginal people have to land, water, culture and heritage, and recognise Aboriginal people as the original custodians of this land.

We recognise and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded, and always was, and always will be Aboriginal Land.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT US	4
EXECUTIVE REPORTS	6
2023 NSW HIV DATA	12
PEER NAVIGATION	14
INFORM & EMPOWER	16
INCLUDE & CONNECT	18
REPRESENT & ADVOCATE	20
WE REMEMBER	22

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Positive Life NSW acknowledges the ongoing support from NSW Health and all of our partners, supporters, peers and contributors, from all facets of the HIV sector.

Positive Life NSW also acknowledges the tireless and continued contribution and participation of all people living with HIV.

## 2023/24 AUDITED FINANCIAL REPORT

<https://www.positivelife.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/plnsw-2023-24-financials.pdf>

# ABOUT POSITIVE LIFE NSW

Positive Life NSW (Positive Life) is the largest peer-led and run representative body of all people living with and affected by HIV in Australia based in NSW, and the voice of all people living with HIV in NSW since 1988.

We empower all people living with HIV in NSW with health promotion information, peer support, referrals and advice with the aim of ensuring optimum well-being, care and support for the Body Positive including our friends, family and carers across NSW.

- Our Board of Directors are elected community members all of whom live with HIV.
- We have over 35 years community experience advocating for all people living with HIV with the aim of eliminating stigma and discrimination, prejudice and isolation.
- We empower and support all people living with HIV to live their best lives by providing information, targeted referrals, and policy advice through a range of peer support and community engagement activities.
- We advocate and represent on behalf of the NSW Body Positive and lobby government, researchers and all relevant bodies about issues of concern for all people living with HIV in NSW and those affected by HIV.
- We collaborate with HIV specialists and mainstream services to improve the health and quality of life of all people living with HIV.



Positive Life as a membership-based organisation for all people living with or affected by HIV in NSW. This includes:

- gay and bisexual men
- heterosexual people
- women
- Aboriginal people
- trans and gender diverse people
- people from all multicultural communities
- older people
- people who inject drugs
- migrants and refugees
- our family, friends and partners who are also affected by HIV

We carry out our work with people living with or affected by HIV through both our Peer Support Programs and Social Inclusion Programs.



### **Inform**

We offer information, advice, referrals, health promotion, and workshops, and forums on all HIV-related issues across HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment and healthcare.

### **Advocate**

We advocate on HIV-related public policy issues across the social determinants of health, and promote the emerging health and wellbeing needs of all people living with HIV in NSW.

### **Represent**

We represent the interests of all people living with HIV in NSW with government, clinical care, community and research bodies, in legislation and public health policy.



# FROM OUR PRESIDENT

STEPHEN LUNNY

## AS I REFLECT ON THE PAST YEAR, IT HAS BEEN A TIME WHERE WE

have delivered a significant amount of work on a number of important issues while promoting a positive image of people living with and affected by HIV ensuring their optimum well-being, care and support.

A central piece of work in the past financial year has been the initiation of our Positive Minds peer-based counselling pilot program. With the support of Gilead, this unique program addresses significant identified gaps in the availability of mental health support services for people living with HIV (PLHIV). The Positive Minds service addresses this unmet need for many PLHIV in NSW to access

counselling services, especially those who are ineligible for Medicare, experiencing financial or technological disadvantage or who do not qualify for assistance. This program is integrated within our peer navigation programs as part of a wholistic, wraparound service delivery model, and has quickly proven to increase the self-agency of PLHIV enrolled in the project to make evidence-based informed decisions about their HIV and mental health care.

Another significant area of work has been with young people living with HIV transitioning from paediatric to adult healthcare, in partnership with the Paediatric HIV Service at the Sydney Children's Hospital in Randwick. In early 2024, Positive Life NSW facilitated 'Teen Camp' a

**“AS THE LEADING PEER-BASED HIV COMMUNITY ORGANISATION IN NSW, POSITIVE LIFE NSW CONTINUES TO REMAIN TRUE TO ITS PURPOSE, EMPOWERING OUR SISTERS AND BROTHERS LIVING WITH HIV IN NSW WITH INFORMATION, REFERRAL AND ADVICE ON ALL ISSUES OF CONCERN TO US AS PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV.”**



residential Australasian camp for children and young people living with HIV supported by volunteers from staff, board and community.

A third essential achievement was the re-introduction of in-clinic peer navigation services in Greater Western Sydney post-COVID, in order to maintain equity in the HIV response across marginalised communities living with HIV in these areas.

Unfortunately, after seven years of independently funding our long-running Housing Support program, the Positive Life NSW Board were forced to make a regretful and difficult decision in October 2023 to close this important program due to the impact on our cash reserves. While we extensively explored our funding options to maintain the program after the 2016 pilot funding, with great disappointment this proved to be unsuccessful. We continue to recognise that secure housing is a key social determinant of better health and wellbeing for PLHIV and our peer navigators continue to advocate and support PLHIV through referrals to ensure the needs and interests of our community continue to be met. I acknowledge we are only able to remain focused and responsive to the emerging needs of all PLHIV in NSW due to the contributions from our members, collaboration with our agency partners and sector allies as well as the critical funding support we receive from NSW Health, the MAC AIDS Fund, Gilead Sciences and ViiV Healthcare.

I cannot thank you enough. You are and always will be the most significant part of our existence and a major part of our success.

Stephen Lunny  
President



## FROM OUR TREASURER

CHOMPOL 'NEW' CHAIMONGKOL

### THE 2023/2024 FINANCIAL YEAR SAW TOTAL INCOME OF \$1.322M,

which was higher than last year by approximately \$97K, mainly due to consumer price index (CPI) on NSW Ministry of Health (MoH) funding, higher grants received and increases in other revenue.

In comparison, our year-end expenditure decreased to \$1.307m (lower by \$57K or 4% compared to last year) resulting in a net surplus of \$15K (as compared with a deficit of \$139K last year).

This is an outstanding performance especially compared to the past two years where we ran at a deficit due to our commitment to support the Housing and Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander Health Programs out of our cash reserves..

We understand that the NSW MoH funding is not enough to meet the cost of all the services we provide to the community, hence, Positive Life NSW continued to work hard to advocate for our peers and has won and received new grants in FY2024 to fund a mental health pilot program called 'Positive Minds' from Gilead Sciences. We also received a number of grants totalling \$165K that will be spent in FY2025 in the areas of a heterosexually identifying prevention workshop, increasing capacity in our peer navigation service and onward funding of our counselling service.

In March 2024, we were advised by our auditor



**“IT HAS BEEN A REMARKABLE YEAR FOR POSITIVE LIFE NSW, AND WE CONTINUE TO STAND BY OUR MISSION OF EMPOWERING ALL PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV IN NSW.”**



ESV that they had changed their business model and would no longer be able to provide services to Positive Life NSW. After an extensive EOI process the Board appointed SJDA Audit Specialists who completed the audit for the year ending 30 June 2024 in accordance with the requirement of section 6-40 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*.

Positive Life NSW continued to maintain a sound balance sheet position throughout the year. Assets were predominantly in cash at bank and on term deposit, whilst total liabilities included grants in advance. The term deposits provide Positive Life NSW with income earned from interest, and also act as a safety net in case of any unforeseen major expense. Cash, reserves and financial ratios remained reasonably healthy throughout the period, which ensured that Positive Life NSW was able to meet its financial obligations as and when they became due and payable.

It has been a remarkable year for Positive Life NSW, and we continue to stand by our mission of empowering all people living with HIV with information, referrals and advice.

Chompol Chaimongkol  
Treasurer



## FROM OUR CEO

JANE COSTELLO

### I AM PLEASED TO PRESENT TO OUR MEMBERS THE 2023/2024

Positive Life NSW Annual Report. As always, we work to deliver our vision of empowering all people living with HIV in NSW to attain optimal health and quality of life, free from the impacts of stigma and discrimination.

Throughout the challenges of this year, we have continued to support our diverse community of people living with HIV across NSW by delivering comprehensive health promotion information, advice, social inclusion programs, workshops, and targeted referrals to our sector partners and health agencies. Our efforts continued to drive our focused delivery of services that directly advance and support

the quality of life of all people living with HIV across NSW.

These initiatives centered around the delivery of peer navigation support which included treatments information, healthcare navigation, ageing support including support for long-term survivors of HIV/AIDS, employment support, counselling, and social inclusion. Through our work this year we have noted an increased number of people seeking HIV-related support who have never previously engaged with Positive Life NSW before..

Peer Navigation continued to be integral in providing one-on-one person-centred, culturally appropriate support for all people living with HIV from our experienced and

**“THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF HEALTHCARE, ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTIES, AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS PRESENT CHALLENGES THAT DEMAND INNOVATION, ADAPTABILITY, AND RESILIENCE. WITHIN THESE CHALLENGES ARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH, COLLABORATION, AND FRESH APPROACHES TO BETTER SERVE OUR COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV.”**



professional Peer Navigators. Despite growing funding constraints across the HIV sector, we expanded our in-clinic peer navigation services to ensure continued access to vital peer-led health systems and services support in Greater Western Sydney.

Throughout this time, the immigration system continued to operate as a tangible force of stigma and discrimination that functionally diminished the quality of life for people coming to Australia to work or study and who were diagnosed shortly after arrival. We remain concerned about the challenges of late and advanced diagnosis facing people living with HIV in Greater Western Sydney, the result of missed opportunities in primary care. The continued reduction of bulk-billing services along with retiring s100 prescribers across the state continue to pose an ongoing impact for all people living with HIV.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated team of board and staff, volunteers, partners, funders and particularly Positive Life NSW’s members. We are grateful for your collaborative efforts across a broad section of the NSW Health blood borne virus response. I would like to particularly acknowledge the NSW Ministry of Health, the City of Sydney, MAC AIDS Fund, NADA, Be Connected, South West Sydney LHD, Sydney LHD, Gilead Sciences and ViiV Healthcare for their continuing support for the work that we do.

Our work is significantly enhanced by our partnerships which provide us with an opportunity to increase our capacity and reach ever more towards being the voice of all people living with HIV across NSW.

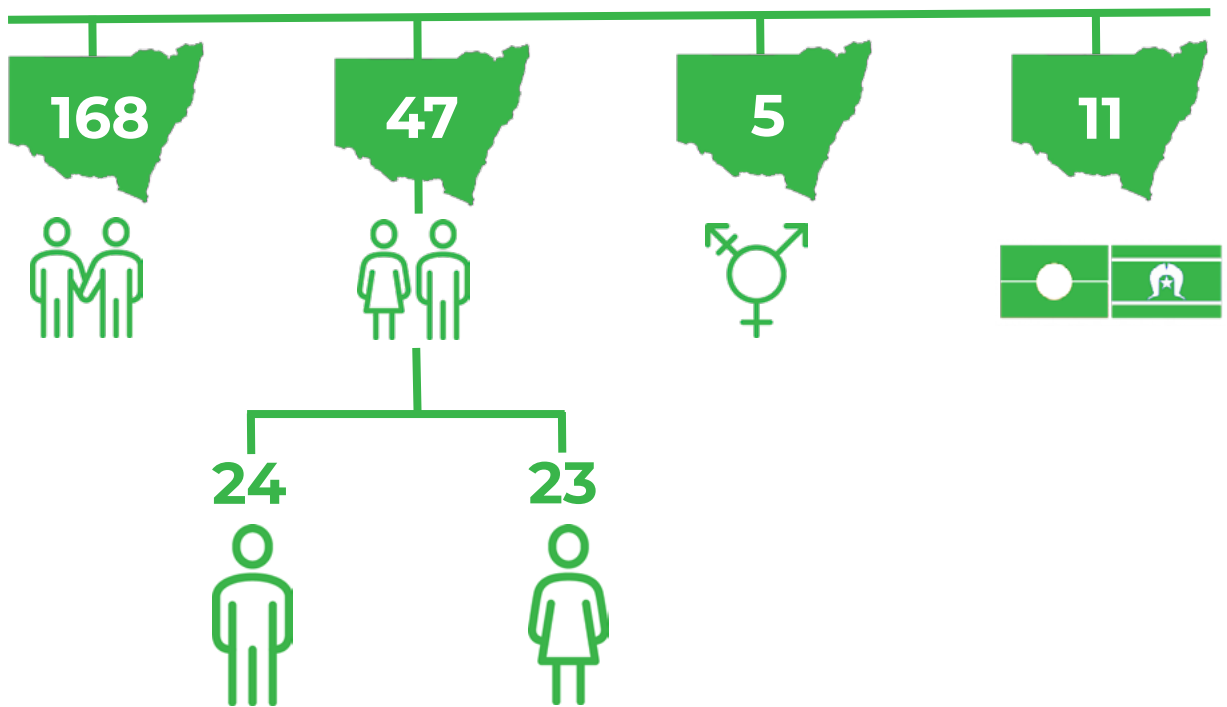
Jane Costello  
Chief Executive Officer



# 2023 NSW HIV DATA

ANDREW HESLOP

**231** new HIV diagnoses in 2023 of which

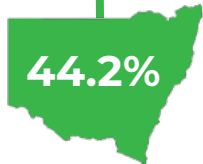




new HIV diagnoses



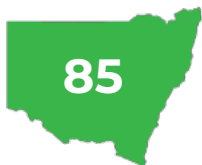
diagnoses occurred via injecting drug use or via another exposure



showed evidence of a late stage diagnosis



were under the age of 40



were between the ages of 40 to 69



was over the age of 70

THE MAJORITY OF HET DIAGNOSED WITH HIV IN NSW IN 2023 WERE BORN OVERSEAS (76%, n=35)

**“IN 2023, THERE WERE 600,778 HIV TESTS PERFORMED ACROSS 12 PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LABORATORIES IN NSW”**

The majority of heterosexual people diagnosed with HIV in NSW in 2023 were born overseas (76%, n=35).

The majority of men who have sex with men diagnosed with HIV in NSW in 2023 were born overseas (65%, n=109).

During 2022, NSW has successfully met two of the three UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets. An estimated 96% of people diagnosed with HIV were receiving care, 98% of people diagnosed with HIV were receiving treatment, and 99% of people diagnosed with HIV were virally suppressed.

Community pharmacies have played a crucial role in enabling access to treatment for people living with HIV.



# PEER NAVIGATION

## ANDREW HESLOP

Positive Life NSW offers peer support for all people living with HIV across NSW to navigate and access medical, clinical, employment or vocational pathways to improve our health and quality of life, as well as a range of peer support groups and social inclusion events to maintain mental health and wellbeing.



733

community members living with HIV received support from Positive Life NSW



4,187

support outcomes and occasions of service were offered during this financial year



349

actions were offered each month on average

or



17

service activities each working day

**“COMING TO THIS MEETING  
CHANGED MY THINKING  
AND EVERYTHING.”  
- COMMUNITY MEMBER**

Whether you are a woman living with HIV, a heterosexual person living with HIV, or a gay man living with HIV, talking with someone else like yourself offers one of the best ways to get understanding and find solutions to live well with HIV.

**“I FEEL VERY MUCH LOVED,  
EVERYONE IS SO AMAZING.  
THE STAFF AND EVERYTHING  
IS GOOD FOR ME.  
I HAVE MORE LOVE  
FOR THE PEOPLE AROUND ME.”  
- COMMUNITY MEMBER**



# INFORM & EMPOWER

CRAIG ANDREWS

As the voice of the 11,000 people living with HIV in NSW, Positive Life NSW speaks up and speaks out for all people living with HIV across NSW. Our integrated digital communications strategy is our primary tool to lift awareness on a range of emerging issues, interests, concerns and needs to empower the Body Positive in NSW.



**over 5.2 million**

website hits to the  
Positive Life NSW website

**4,235 blog hits**

across 53 published  
blog posts

**74 articles**

published in external press

**188  
community EDMs**

to Positive Life NSW  
community subscribers

**46 speaking  
engagements**

delivered by 43 PSB speakers to  
approx. **2,663 people**

**“I FEEL VERY GRATEFUL FOR THIS  
OPPORTUNITY AND FOR  
BEING PART OF THE FAMILY.”**

**– PSB INDUCTEE 2024**

**12 Life.mail bulletins**

**4 factsheets**

**3 Talkabout  
magazine  
editions**

**5 media releases**

Positive Speakers Bureau  
HIV Health Promotion  
Treatments Information  
Peer Navigation & Support  
Social & Peer Support Events  
Participatory Community Research  
Advocacy & Policy

Phone 02 9206 2177  
Freecall 1800 245 677  
PositiveLife.org.au



## INCLUDE & CONNECT

BILLY SUYAPMO & PRISCILLA NJERI

Positive Life NSW offers a range of online and face to face social inclusion and community events to foster a sense of belonging and reduce social isolation. Peer support and inclusion is the critical component for people living with HIV to navigate their lives with HIV, connect with their peers and their community and achieve optimal quality of life.

This financial year, Positive Life NSW offered a total of **102** events

**307 people** joined in **7** [+Connect] events

**191 heterosexual people** living with HIV came to **10** Social Club events

**122 women** living with HIV attended **12** women's peer support groups

**105 people** living with HIV attended **9** Online Positive Conversations

**91 gay and bisexual men** living with HIV joined in **5** Peer2Peer social support groups

**42 gay and bisexual men** living with HIV participated in **3** information forums

**26 heterosexual men** living with HIV attended **4** men's peer support groups

**“THANK YOU FOR ALL THE SUPPORT YOU HAVE ALL SHOWN ME. THANK YOU FOR ALWAYS BEING KIND TO MY FAMILY AT THE EVENTS AND FOR MAKING ME FEEL SUPER COMFORTABLE TO TALK TO YOU ALL.”**  
**– COMMUNITY MEMBER**

**89 people** living with HIV participated in **3** consultation and information sessions (CCEF and In The Know events)

**7 heterosexual people** living with HIV came to the inaugural TORQUE workshop

**17 young people** diagnosed with HIV at birth attended the inaugural Teen Camp Weekend along with a team of **12 volunteers**



# REPRESENT & ADVOCATE

## POSITIVE LIFE NSW

Positive Life NSW collaborates with our HIV sector and allied health partners and stakeholders to raise, represent and advance the interests of all people living with HIV across NSW.



84

**advisory groups & committees**

in relevant Ministry, NSW Health, research and HIV sector groups to improve the health and quality of life of all people living with HIV.



420

**stakeholder meetings** with HIV sector partners

highlighting marginalised populations at risk of HIV, increasing awareness of testing and prevention strategies, reducing late HIV diagnoses, and the benefits of treatment for people living with HIV



46

**training & information sessions** in partnership with clinicians and prescribers supporting the needs of all people living with HIV



5

**annual community representational** events promoting and highlighting the presence and place of all people living with HIV

NSW IS HOME TO OVER 11,000 PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV, REPRESENTING THE LARGEST NUMBER OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV JURISDICTIONALLY IN AUSTRALIA. APPROXIMATELY 5,861 PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV ARE OVER 55 YEARS OF AGE, OF WHICH 645 ARE WOMEN.

PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV OVER THE AGE OF 55 YEARS' REGULARLY EXPERIENCE MEDICAL COMPLICATIONS, POLYPHARMACY, POORER MENTAL HEALTH, SOCIAL ISOLATION, STIGMATISATION AND DISCRIMINATION ALONG WITH UP TO THREE OR MORE HEALTH CONDITIONS BESIDES HIV.



## **WE REMEMBER**

### **POSITIVE LIFE NSW**

Positive Life NSW honours the memory of our friends, partners and family, allies, and community members throughout the long history of HIV/AIDS in NSW.

**“THE SYDNEY CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL IS A TIME TO GATHER TOGETHER AND REMEMBER, GRIEVE AND HONOUR THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY HIV/AIDS.”**





The voice of all people living with HIV

## WEBSITE

[www.positivelife.org.au](http://www.positivelife.org.au)

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## ADDRESS

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## PHONE/ EMAIL

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1800 245 677 (freecall)  
E: [contact@positivelife.org.au](mailto:contact@positivelife.org.au)

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Warning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this document may contain images of deceased Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. Images used in this publication are sourced stock photography and are used for illustrative purposes. They do not imply any particular HIV status, sexuality, attitudes, or behaviours..

