

NAPWA President celebrates 20 years of partnerships, policy and positive empowerment

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NAPWA President Robert Mitchell's speech at NAPWA's 20th Anniversary Reception on 3 April 2009.

Distinguished guests, Senator Louise Pratt representing the minister for the Department of Health and Ageing, Kay Hull federal member for Riverina, the Deputy Lord Mayor Marcelle Hoff and the Honourable Michael Kirby, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to acknowledge the traditional people of the land on which this event is being held, and their elders both past and present.

After a long and shared history I stand here before you as the president of NAPWA to welcome you to our celebration of two decades of partnerships, policy and positive empowerment.

As you would all know, Australia's HIV record is the product not only of the dedicated politicians, the community sector, clinicians and researchers involved, but also the invaluable contribution that positive people themselves make in fight against HIV. At this time I'd like to acknowledge the effort made by the hundreds of people living with HIV who have made NAPWA the organisation it is today. As well I would acknowledge the people that were not able to be here today and those no longer with us.

At an event like this I feel profoundly the history and the enormity of NAPWA's achievements. NAPWA has represented people living with HIV at a national level since 1989, however NAPWA's real story began in 1988 at the National AIDS Conference in Hobart, where a group of 20 HIV positive activists took to the stage at the closing session to demand representation in the AIDS response. This was the first time in Australia that a large group of people had self-identified as being HIV-positive. It led to the establishment of the National People Living with AIDS Coalition - an organisation that was later renamed NAPWA. NAPWA's work and the work of our members - those terrific state and territory HIV positive organisations around the country - continue to underscored by this participation.

I am also proud to announce the launch of NAPWA's new strategic plan today, a plan that will move us forward and beyond 2012. The past two decades have seen significant advances in HIV service provision, access, care and treatment, enabling many people with HIV to live longer and to enjoy better health - this is a fact definitely worth celebrating. However, there are still many positive people doing it tough, those who are struggling with continuing health problems, discrimination, stigma and fear. NAPWA will continue to champion the rights and needs of people living with HIV.

I'd like to take this time to thank our dignitaries; Senator Louise Pratt representing the minister for the Department of Health and Ageing, Kay Hull federal member for Riverina, the Deputy Lord Mayor Marcelle Hoff and the Honourable Michael Kirby and all you wonderful guests for marking this occasion with us today.

And thank you to our sponsors Pfizer, Glaxo Smith and Klein, Gilead, Boehringer Ingelheim, Glyde, and Tibotec/Janssen-Cilag.

So without further ado, I will hand you back to Dr Kath Albury, and welcome you all to NAPWA's 20th anniversary celebration.

Please enjoy the evening.

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