

Spreading the word

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Many of the prevention initiatives being developed by state-based positive groups have a relevance that resonates beyond their borders. Here, we look at two that warrant national attention: Positive Life NSW looks at serodiscordant gay couples while [PLWHA](#) [1] Person (or People) Living with HIV/AIDS. Victoria takes on young heterosexuals.

NSW tackles serodiscordant relationships

With about a quarter of us in positive-negative relationships and around a quarter of new diagnoses occurring within them, serodiscordance is significant subject matter. It is also complex and very personal. However, Positive Life NSW manages to handle the subject with a resonance that speaks to positive-negative gay couples everywhere.

Interviews with couples form the background to this campaign. We hear from Tony and Sean, Chad and Ari, David and Jim, and Ty and Min Chuan about how they deal with HIV in their relationships. There is no right way to tell someone you're positive or one set of relationship agreements. But by reading about the experience of others sometimes your own 'story' unfolds and the direction becomes clearer.

'The fact that we are a positive and negative couple did not affect our relationship ... We never had an issue about safe sex, we simply do it. You can't help who you fall in love with.' – Ty

The one-off lifestyle magazine in which these stories appear is a generous, visually interesting publication. Through it we explore the vulnerabilities people sometimes feel in relationships: the need to trust; the differences in relationship dynamics and how they are played out; the break down or change in agreements. We get a hint here of why a quarter of new diagnoses occur in relationships. Then we are provided with ideas on how to deal with these challenges.

SERO DISCO – Why let HIV get in the way of a good relationship? also answers some practical questions. Does undetectable mean un-infectious? How safe is oral sex? Is pulling out okay? Do you rate as the perfect boyfriend?

'If you practise safe sex, a positive-negative relationship is very safe where you know the person and take care. It's much safer than casual sex where you assume the other guy's negative and you might take more risks.' – Ricki

Speaking to couples about taking care of each other begins with listening to them. Positive Life NSW takes this another step and passes on what they had to say ... which speaks to all of us.

For your own copy of the magazine call Positive Life NSW on (02) 9361 6011 or email volunteer@positivelife.org.au [2]

Victoria cautions young heterosexuals



Living in Australia, it is sometimes hard to accept that this epidemic is 99% heterosexual. But an initiative developed by the PLWHA HIV Positive Speakers' Bureau (PSB) in Victoria firmly reminds us of this global reality.

In a campaign launched last year, speakers are trained to address the risks not just to gay men but to young heterosexuals, of contracting HIV. Their primary focus is teenagers at school who may travel as backpackers to HIV hot spots and to employees of corporations who send staff overseas.

The research behind this initiative is compelling. Among backpackers surveyed in Sydney and Cairns, 39% had casual sex in Australia with someone they had known for less than 24 hours. Half used protection only occasionally when they had casual sex, and one quarter never used protection at all.

The good news is that travellers who make informed choices about safer sex at home are prepared and protect themselves when they travel overseas.

This is the hook the PSB has used to gain access to schools and corporations throughout Victoria. And it seems to be working. Last year they achieved a far higher request rate from schools and spoke to more than 4800 people across the state – an increase of more than 1000 over the previous year.

Peers who are game enough to stand up and tell their story are brave – particularly when the audience is Year 9-12 students and the intention is to convince them to learn from your mistakes.

Their booklet Protecting young Australians from HIV provides secondary school principals and corporate employers with a convincing argument why they should engage with the service. The choice of speakers is an added incentive.

For more information about the PLWHA Victoria's Speakers' Bureau please call (03) 9865 6772 or visit their website at www.plwhavictoria.org.au/speakers [3] and www.positivespeakers.com.au [4]

- [Gay and bisexual men](#)
- [heterosexuals](#)
- [relationships](#)
- [Safe sex](#)
- [travelling with HIV](#)

Links:

[1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/119>

[2] <mailto:volunteer@positivelife.org.au>

[3] <http://www.plwhavictoria.org.au/speakers>

[4] <http://www.positivespeakers.com.au>