

## 20 years of one voice

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NAPWA turned 20 the other day and we threw a party. I'm not usually big on parties but this one was different. It felt like everyone was having the birthday and unlike those just-for-the-sake-of-it once-a-year affairs we all really deserved a celebration . . .

NAPWA's life began at a 1988 national AIDS conference in Tasmania when, during the closing plenary, 20 AIDS activists took to the stage and demanded that HIV-positive people were represented in the AIDS response. It was the first time in Australia that a group of people stood up together and self-identified as being HIV positive.

Their action led to the establishment of the National People Living With AIDS Coalition (NPLWAC) – an advocacy organisation with the primary mission of increasing positive representation on a national level and which, in the early 1990s, was renamed NAPWA.

Up until this time, government had looked to individual experts for direction. Now they were hearing from a new form of advocate – the united voice. Originally, this voice demanded AIDS TREATMENTS NOW. It originated from HIV positive people across Australia via their community-based groups who constitute NAPWA's membership.

Later, NAPWA started lobbying government on a range of HIV-specific and broader health and social policy issues.

But HIV treatments (and access to them) always remained at the forefront of our work.

Today we work with service providers to ensure that the current needs of positive people are being met and we participate in community-based education initiatives.

We develop policy and contribute to policy development across the health sector.

We foster partnerships with government, the research community, HIV clinicians, the pharmaceutical industry and other consumer health and disability groups and assist many state and local HIV positive organisations to undertake their own advocacy, education and policy work.

NAPWA continues to voice the needs of HIV positive people, especially those dealing with treatment issues, clinical trials, legal problems, disabilities and support services.

It's no wonder NAPWA threw a party the other day for our members and supporters.

Everyone deserved to stand still for a moment and acknowledge all those who have contributed over the last two decades to bring the organisation to where it is today.

But we didn't party too long. There was also the next twenty years to think about. And tomorrow, after all, was going to be the beginning of the next journey.

### Comments from NAPWA members

The partnership model that we really foster here in Australia is something that has really been admired and adopted in many other parts of the world. JOHN DAYE

Perhaps this twentieth celebration is a way of continuing to tell the story of what has gone on in the past. JOHN RULE

It shows me a role model and that outcomes are achievable for all of us. WILO MUWADDA

NAPWA is a peer-based network truly representative of positive people. It remains as an organisation connected to the community. KATHERINE LEANNE

State-based groups can take something to a state level but if they want to take something nationally they have to have one voice. NAPWA's been able to deliver that one voice which is hard in a diverse organisation like this one.  
LOU MCCALLUM

Increasingly we're becoming much more involved in social policy as the social impacts of HIV become more evident.  
ROB LAKE

It is the organisation that focuses on those older people who have serious illnesses related to HIV disease. There isn't another organisation that puts that on the national agenda.  
ROSS DUFFIN

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