

MEETING THE NEEDS OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AT RISK OF ACQUIRING HIV AND LIVING WITH HIV IN NEW SOUTH WALES IN A NON ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

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ACON's Aboriginal Project

ACON's Aboriginal Project aims to help and enable Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender/sistergirl, HIV positive, engaged in sex work or who inject drugs to improve their health and wellbeing. We do this by providing relevant knowledge, skills, resources and social networks within a culturally appropriate model of holistic health that recognises emotional, spiritual, social and mental wellbeing. We also work with many different groups to tackle all forms of racism in our community.

ACON aims to meet the needs of Aboriginal people at risk of acquiring HIV and living with HIV through a range of state-wide activities that are based on evidence and working in partnership with other organisations.

The Aboriginal Project is made up of a full time Team Leader and four part time Health Promotion Officer positions. All positions are Aboriginal identified positions and each has a role in supporting people with HIV and people at risk of acquiring HIV. Although each staff member works within their specific role, each worker provides safe sex/HIV prevention information and living well with HIV information to the community members who they work with.

HEALTH PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

- Retreat for People Living with HIV - The retreat offers a range of activities for Aboriginal people living with HIV including recreation activities, information sessions on living well with HIV and opportunities for social support
- Supporting community events such as Black Pearls Variety Nights

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & LIAISON

- Information sharing
- Outreach to community events such as NAIDOC Week

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- Supporting community participation in GLBT events such as Mardi Gras
- Working with partners such as Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative
- House of BlackSTAR Dance Party 09
- Community development programs

PEER EDUCATION

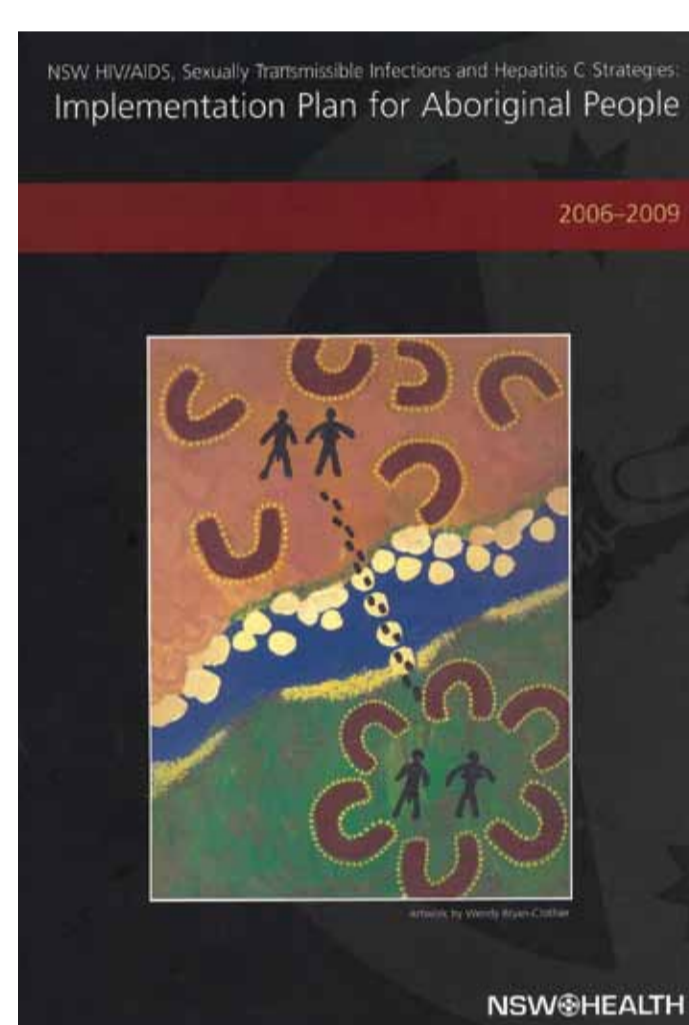
ACON has delivered peer education programs for over 21 years for different parts of the GLBT community but we have never had an Aboriginal specific program. The role of the Peer Education Officer will be to develop a pilot peer education program for Aboriginal gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender/sistergirls that will include a strong HIV prevention message.

TEAM LEADER

The team leader facilitates partnerships with a range of projects and organisations which provide programs and services for people living with HIV including the Luncheon Club and The Haven. The Team Leader produces Aboriginal specific information and resources to make these venues more accessible for Aboriginal people. This has included providing positive Aboriginal speakers for NAIDOC and Open Days for Aboriginal Sexual Health Workers. The Team Leader also works with partners state-wide and Australia-wide on various HIV promotion campaigns.



Evidence And Policy That Inform Our Work



NSW HIV/AIDS, Sexually Transmissible Infections and Hepatitis C Strategies: Implementation Plan for Aboriginal People 2006 - 2009

PRINCIPLES OF THE PLAN

The six principles of the Plan which ACON uses to guide its planning and execution of sexual health services to Aboriginal people are:

- Community ownership and participation
- Holistic approach to health
- Collaboration and partnership
- Active outreach
- Evidence-based
- Developing the workforce.

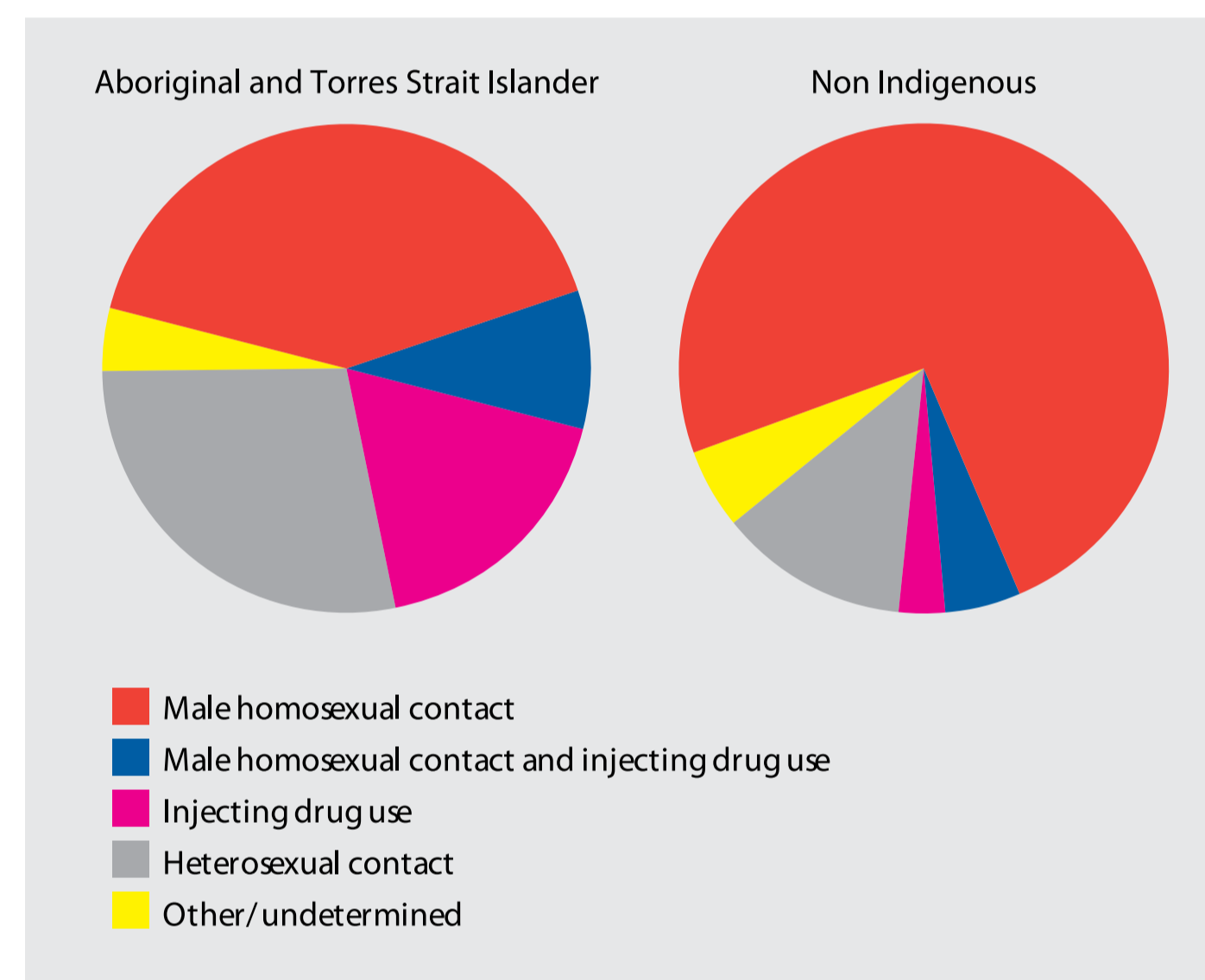
KEY POINTS FROM THE MID TERM REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

In May 2009 a review of the Implementation Plan was conducted and six key points were made:

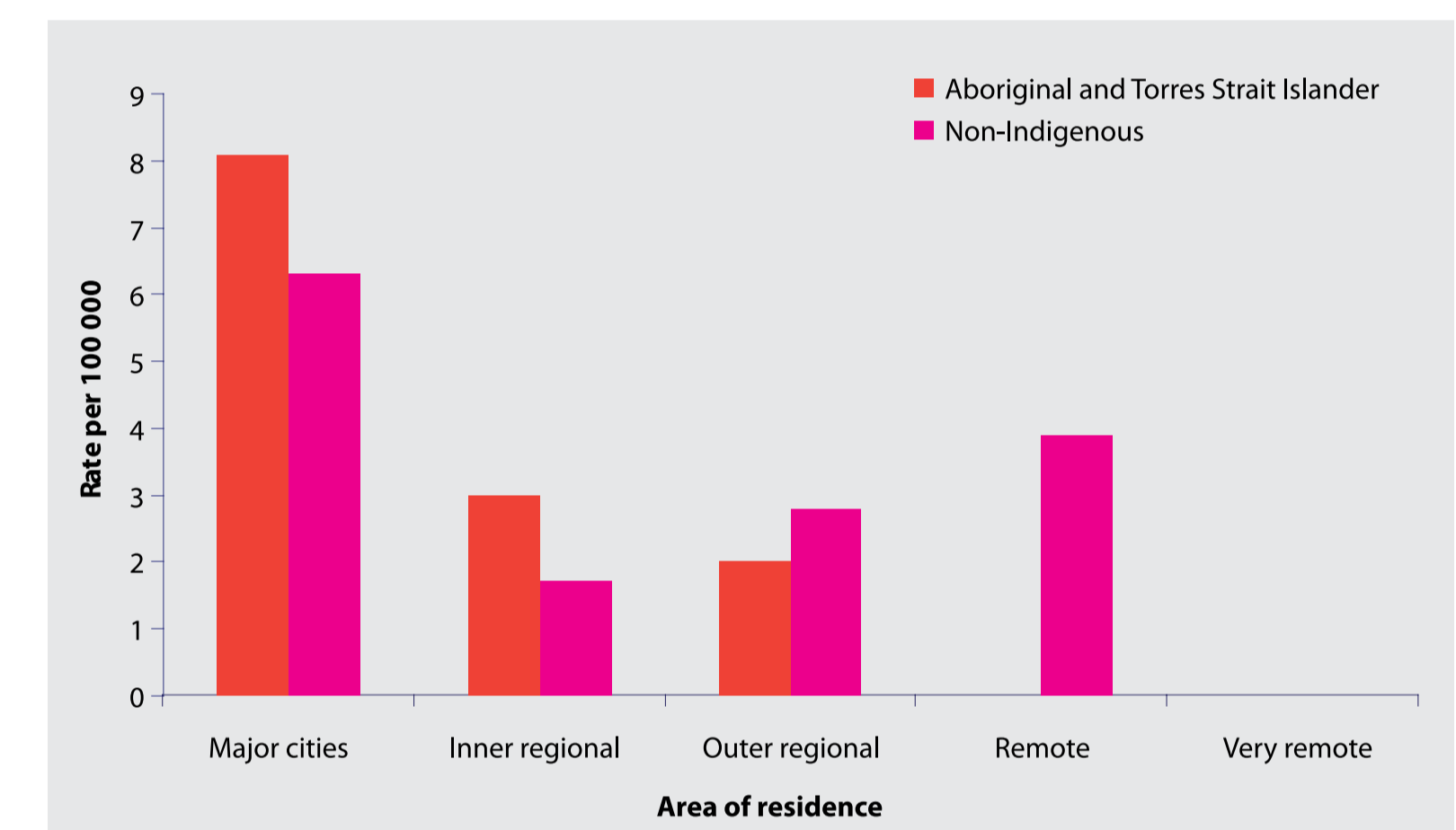
- The need to value, respect and acknowledge the role of Aboriginal Sexual Health Workers as cultural brokers
- The need to value the building of relationships, being visible, 'having cups of tea' and improving data collection on time spent doing these important activities
- Embed HIV, STI and Hepatitis C in broader health services
- Share clinical models between HIV services and GPs, Aboriginal Medical Services etc

- Find flexible, innovative service delivery models that address real barriers to service delivery e. g provision of cab vouchers for transport
- Bring clinicians to communities to allow for cultural information exchange.

HOW ABORIGINAL PEOPLE HAVE ACQUIRED HIV



WHERE HIV POSITIVE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE LIVE



Building ACON's Cultural Competency

In 2007/2008 a review of ACON's work with Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people began. It had been ten years since the creation of the Aboriginal Project and the first time such a review had been conducted on ACON's work. Consultations were held with our partners and with Aboriginal communities. The outcome of consultation was:

- Move the focus of the Aboriginal Project from case management to an evidence-informed population health model
- Develop an Action Plan which sets out ACON's key actions for the next three years.

In September 2008 the ACON Board adopted the *Organisational Action Plan for ACON's Work with Aboriginal People 2008 - 2011*.

This Plan outlines what we seek to achieve, including:

- Ensure ACON responds appropriately and comprehensively to the NSW HIV/AIDS, STI and Hepatitis C Strategies: Implementation Plan for Aboriginal People
- To revise and update ACON's Aboriginal specific project work.

The principles which are fundamental to ACON's work with Aboriginal people are:

- A meaningful recognition of the legacy of Australian history
- The central involvement and self determination of Aboriginal people
- The importance and value of partnership with Aboriginal community organisations and with the Aboriginal sexual health workforce
- Respect for Aboriginal cultural practices and values
- Social justice and human rights
- Effectiveness and high quality in practice
- Confidentiality
- Community outreach including whole of community framework.

The Plan also outlines a list of five Key Action Areas for all ACON staff to aim to achieve by 2011 including:

KEY ACTION AREA 1: INCREASE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO ACON'S PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- Provide biennial basic training on Aboriginal issues plus service and program specific training to staff
- Promote programs and services in Aboriginal media and networks
- Promote staff vacancies and volunteer opportunities in Aboriginal media and networks
- Address visibility issues in front of house/reception areas

KEY ACTION AREAS 2: INCREASE THE RELEVANCE OF ACON'S HEALTH PROMOTION TO ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

- Ensure Aboriginal people's participation in the development of health promotion materials
- Ensure the visual representation of Aboriginal people in ACON's health promotion material
- Target the distribution of ACON's health promotion materials more specifically to Aboriginal people
- Ensure Aboriginal health content in health promotion materials, including volunteer training and education materials

KEY ACTION AREA 3: STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS

- Meet regularly with local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHO) to identify potential points of collaboration
- Meet regularly with the AIDS and Infectious Diseases Branch of NSW Health
- Strengthen relationships with the Aboriginal Sexual Health Workers Network (ASHWN) and promote ACON as a state-wide resource for the ASHWN
- Formalise the partnership with the Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council of NSW
- Continue to participate in the Aboriginal Sexual Health Advisory Committee (ASHAC)
- Solidify ACON's Aboriginal Advisory Group

KEY ACTION AREA 4: SUPPORT THE WORK OF OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVES UNDER THE NSW HIV/AIDS, SEXUALLY TRANSMISSIBLE INFECTIONS AND HEPATITIS C STRATEGIES: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE 2006 - 2009

- Fulfill 'Partner' responsibilities under the Plan
- Participate in local Aboriginal Sexual Health Advisory Committees
- Develop stronger relationships to support effective case management, clinical service delivery and other programs, especially with AHS
- Specifically promote our availability and capacity to support service delivery and program delivery with relevant stakeholder/s

KEY ACTION AREA 5: IMPROVE THE WORK OF ACON'S ABORIGINAL SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

- Move from a local focus to a state-wide focus
- From primary focus on case management and individual peer support to health promotion and community development
- Move from separate gay, lesbian, sistergirl projects to a broader GLBT project with focus on HIV/AIDS
- Increase volunteer participation including through solidifying the ACON Aboriginal Advisory Group

Future directions

Future directions for ACON include:

- Continuing to implement the *Organisational Action Plan for ACON's work with Aboriginal People 2008 - 2011*
- Continuing to expand, evaluate and improve on the Aboriginal Project's activities by ensuring we continue our state-wide focus, based on evidence and working in partnership, especially with the NSW Aboriginal Sexual Health Worker network.

References

- National Centre for Epidemiology and Clinical Research (2008) *Bloodborne viral and sexually transmitted infections in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: Surveillance Report 2008*. Available online at <http://www.nchechr.unsw.edu.au/NCHECRweb.nsf/page/AboriginalSurvRep>
- ACON (2008) *Organisational Action Plan for ACON's Work with Aboriginal People 2008 - 2011*
- NSW Department of Health (2006) *NSW HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and STI Strategies: Implementation Plan for Aboriginal People 2006 - 2009*. Available online at: www.health.nsw.gov.au/policies/gl/2007/pdf/GL2007_002.pdf

ACON is Australia's largest community-based lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) health and HIV/AIDS organisation. ACON works to improve the health and well-being of the LGBT community and people with HIV, and reduce HIV transmission.

www.acon.org.au



BUILDING OUR COMMUNITY'S HEALTH & WELLBEING