



Submission to the Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives Inquiry into the use of 'fly-in, fly-out' (FIFO) workforce practices in regional Australia.

**Where do you go
for HELP if you think
you have AIDS?**

AIDSLine - 08 9482 0044

AIDSLine is a confidential and
anonymous telephone service
provided by the WA AIDS Council to
the community.

To attend peer support groups for
HIV+ people and their supporters,
contact:



People Living with HIV/AIDS WA Inc.

info@plhawainc.asn.au

www.plhawainc.asn.au

For more information
about the **Sisters of
Perpetual
Indulgence's** safer
sex ministry, go to



theperthsisters.org

from The Perth Sisters & Brothers of The Order of Perpetual Indulgence.

<http://www.theperthsisters.org>

<http://www.theperthbrothers.org>



We are writing to express our support for a new approach to targeted health promotion strategies to prevent Blood Borne Viruses (BBV's) and Sexually Transmitted Infections, (STI's) because this is a major issue effecting Fly in and Fly out and Drive in Drive Out Workers. FIFO/DIDO.

It is time for a new and collaborative community response to BBV and STI prevention and this includes the need for discussion about the methods used to disseminate information not only generally to the public but also for travellers and FIFO/DIDO workers to reduce the rate of STI's and guard against other BBV infections.

The epidemiology of BBV's and STI's in Western Australia is marked by continuing rises of the rate of new infections to the point that this state has the highest rate of infection in all of Australia. In spite of the 10s of thousands of dollars spent on advertising in the Gay Press, in 2011 the rate of HIV infection amongst Gay Men also rose. These factors combined with the alarming increases in the rate of STI's is evidence that Present Strategies for safe sex messages are not resulting in reductions of measurable outcomes, the rate of infections. In the grand scheme of things, luck not good management is the reason why HIV infections have not risen further than they have in WA.

The fact is there is a clear epidemiological link between HIV and high rates of STI infections. Anyone who has the capacity to do a basic google search will find evidence put forward by many sources that where there are High rates of STI's then HIV infection rates also increase as a flow on effect.

Avoidable STI and BBV infections add to already over burdened health care systems, especially in rural and remote areas. There are also issues to relating to the nature of FIFO/DIDO employment and the need to access specialised treatments for BBV's in major capital cities which make management of complex health conditions difficult while maintaining employment.

The "HIV Tattoo in Bali" story raises more questions about the politics underpinning the prevention of Blood Borne Viruses & STI Prevention here at home and the quality and availability of health messages provided to Australians, especially those who are Fly in Fly out Workers who travel to Asian Countries on the way to and from work, prior to their overseas travel, than it does about Indonesian Tattoo Parlours.

This issue also highlights structural deficiencies within the way Health Departments & BBV/STI NGO's are managing the prevention of Blood Borne Virus infections. Not having one single "one stop shop" agency responsible for providing information means that people who are concerned about their health are forced to wade through multiple agency websites with competing mission statements and priorities. This political landscape associated with Blood Borne Virus Prevention fosters inter agency competition and "turf wars" which actually serves to prevent members of the public from accessing basic information written in clear and simple language that they can use to protect their health.

It should be a concern to everyone in Australia that people are being infected with serious infections simply because educational material is not easily accessible by members of the public to prevent infections.



Indulgence
Est. 2006
www.theperthbrothers.org



The Perth Sisters & Brothers of the Order of Perpetual Indulgence are supporting of a group of HIV+ and Hep C people in the call for a new approach and a meeting of Blood Borne Virus NGO's to come together at The Health Consumer Council Of WA to design a new strategy to reach specific Target Groups especially in the Heterosexual community on safe sex and Blood Borne Virus & STI prevention at targeted events. e.g. SEXPO, Travel Expo, Worksites, Schools and targeted Print Media adverts, in for example, Tattoo & Travel Magazines rather than being limited to just the Gay and Lesbian Press, as is the policy in WA now.

We attended Perth Sexpo this year which was attended by 40,000 people. Many people spoke to us were very concerned that there were no safe sex messages of any kind either in pamphlet form or as posters in the toilets, especially as there were many young people and FIFO/DIDO workers who travel in attendance.

Positive People in WA have been calling for proven strategies on Blood Borne Virus & STI Prevention to be implemented such as a new "Where to go for Help" pamphlet with a single streamlined website contact point to be also on Posters for display in Public Toilets. We would like to see information available in clear and simple jargon free language to make it easy for members of the public to access information on how to protect their health to prevent Blood Borne Viruses, STI's and other preventable infections.

The Head of the Australian Medical Association in WA has called for this approach in the light of the recent Bali Tattoo incident where a person was infected with HIV due to a lack of awareness and understanding about the risk factors associated with Blood Borne Virus Prevention. The AMA WA called for posters in toilets at Airports and other venues and we support this call for action.

For some months a group of our positive members have been requesting pamphlets and posters from the WA AIDS Council (WAAC) and a collaborative community response and from other BBV NGO's to ensure that health messages are provided at heterosexual events in Perth given that these are being delivered to Large GAY Community events by the AIDS Council only.

In answer to our request for pamphlets and posters and to attend a meeting The AIDS Council of WA replied that they are not going to Sexpo, Travel Expo or any other major event targeting heterosexuals nor will they provide written information for us to distribute as The AIDS Council of WA do not see this as an important core response to HIV/AIDS Prevention in this state. An email sent to us stated this is a waste of their resources and that the matter is closed for any further discussion.

The AIDS Council and NAPWA's Peak WA Body, HAPAN, refusal to attend the meeting or even discuss this new approach is especially disappointing given the alarming consequence of the report of the Bali HIV Tattoo incident. This is exactly what the Sisters and Brothers of the Order of Perpetual Indulgence are saying the WA Health Department and it's NGO's need to prevent from happening.

WA has the highest rate of HIV infection in Australia and some of the highest STI rates of infection in the world and this directly effects FIFO/DIDO workers. The statistics relating to rising infection rates clearly mean that strategies designed to prevent Blood Borne Virus & STI's through safe sex are not working and we think this should be of concern to everyone and new strategies based on sound epidemiological evidence should be implemented.



It is disappointing that the AIDS Council Staff can come up with "new approach" strategies like their "Boutique Harness Fisting Sex Party" for the Gay and Lesbian Community, which does seem to be very similar to their "old gay workshop approach", however, the same staff don't have the ability to come up with any approach with which to target large heterosexual events?

There is an issue about the level of professional skill that AIDS Council staff possess when it comes to engaging in mainstream HIV/AIDS prevention activities. This is more important than issues of funding and any New strategy The AIDS Council may announce now or in the future.

New ideas are needed to prevent Blood Borne Virus & STI Prevention infections and these need to be designed to meet more than just the needs of the Gay And Lesbian Community only. We are now seeing why this is so important in the Bali HIV/AIDS infection and a call to increase Health and Doctor's resources at mining towns which are close to Mining by FIFO/DIDO.

The AIDS Council needs to be able to adapt to ever changing community needs to provide Blood Borne Virus & STI Prevention strategies that are engaged with a whole of population approach at all levels with built in measures of accountability outcomes linked to reductions in new infections.

There are some old strategies that have been proven to work over and over again such as posters in toilets and pamphlets and reaching FIFO/DIDO workers that attend Large target events that are held in Perth. As a matter of Public Health the AIDS Council staff need to come up with updated strategies on Blood Borne Virus & STI Prevention for Large Heterosexual targeted events. The AIDS Council does attend Large Gay And Lesbian Community Events each year such as Pride Fairday, so why not for heterosexual people too?

If WAAC staff are unable to engage with new approaches for Blood Borne Virus & STI Prevention for Large Heterosexual targeted events, then they should keep old proven Health Prevention strategies in place, such as pamphlets and posters in toilets, until they do have Staff with the ability to come up with new strategies to ensure information on Blood Borne Virus & STI Prevention does reach the heterosexual communities.

Allowing WAAC Management and Staff to refuse to do anything about Blood Borne Virus & STI Prevention in the broader heterosexual community is not acceptable public health policy.

It is very disappointing that the AIDS Council of WA and NAPWA's Peak Body In WA, HAPAN, have also tried to discredit the positive people who have been calling for this important need for information, through Media releases to the Press and Gay Press and to other Health NGO's to stop them from attending the meeting at the Health Consumer's Council. This is also not in the best interests of the public health for WA.

By not acting to redraw the political landscape to streamline and reduce the overlap of responsibility areas and duplications within the Blood Borne Virus Industry ALL Governments are arguably failing not only in their duty of care to protect the health of citizens but is also allowing waste and mismanagement of vital health sector money.

A leadership culture has developed in which the same faces seem to be allowed to continue spending taxpayer money on the same old things with a slight twist without any mandated government requirement of reducing the rate of HIV infection or the rate of other STI infections. New federal and state funding agreements need to have measurable evaluable outcomes of accountability built into them in the future.

The relatively low but rising base load of HIV in the community and the fact that diagnosed positive people DO act responsibly to protect others from infection is the real cause for WA having lower numbers of PLWHA than in other places rather than the Good Management of the Blood Borne Virus Sector.

The Sisters and Brothers of the Order of Perpetual Indulgence will continue to support these Positive people and their call for basic information, pamphlets and posters in toilets and the development of a new strategy for targeting mainstream events, such as the Australian Medical Association also called for at the Airport, Travel Expo, Worksites and Schools, right up to the next Sexpo.



The Order of Perpetual Indulgence is a worldwide GLBTIQ Organisation, established in the USA in 1979 & in Perth in 1990. For more information about the Sisters and Brothers of the Order of Perpetual Indulgence's safer sex ministry please visit www.theperthsisters.org or www.theperthbrothers.org

