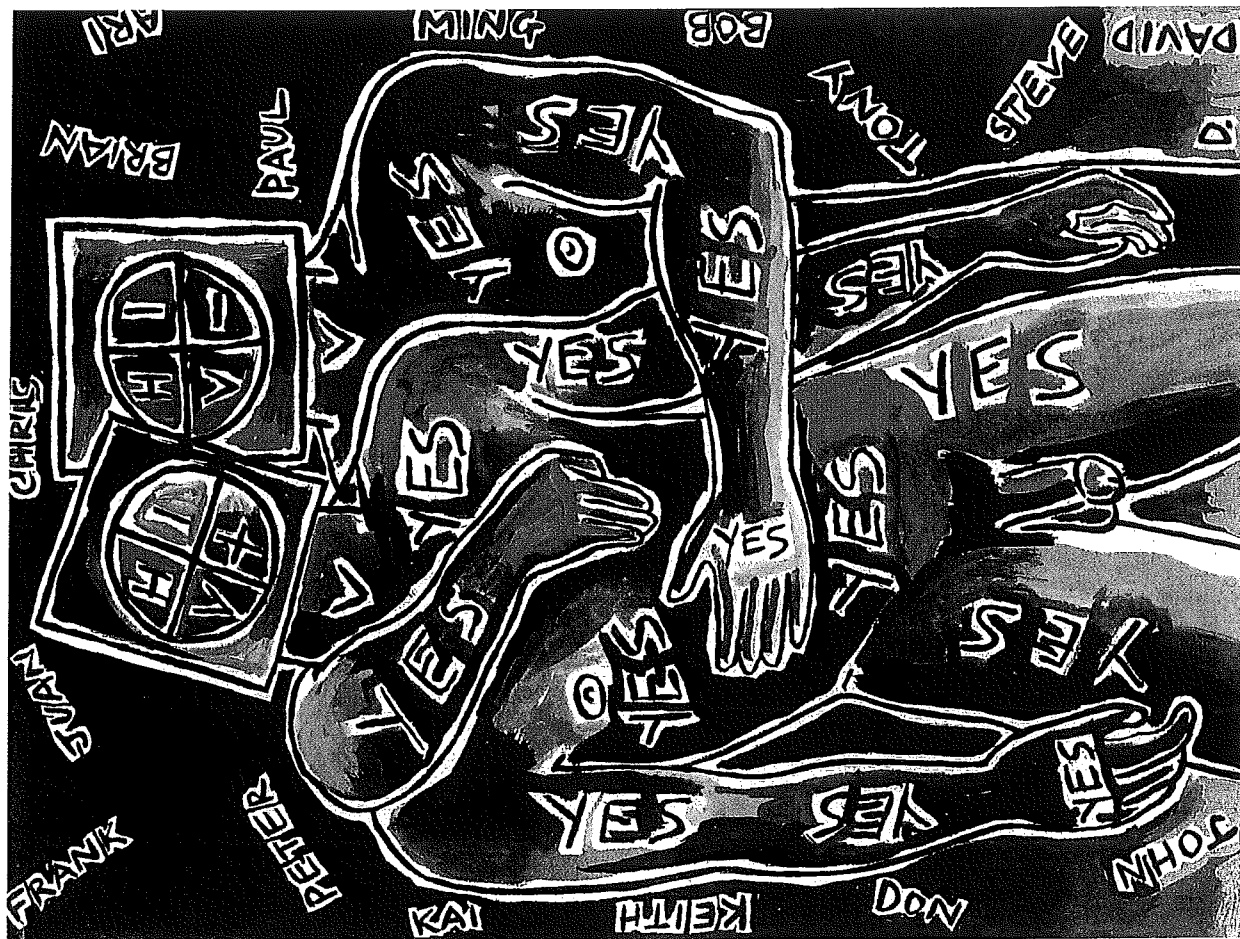




STRENGTHENING the COMMUNITY

ACON & the HIV epidemic in NSW

This book is dedicated
to the Volunteers, Staff and Committee of ACON
who have died
as a result of the HIV epidemic.

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Cover: ACON commissioned a set of works by Sydney artist David McDiarmid in 1992 to promote issues HIV common to both positive and negative gay men.

ACON's Mission

ACON'S purpose is to bring the AIDS crisis to an end.

We strive to do this by

- building on the response of the gay community;
- empowering all affected by the epidemic; and
- achieving self-determination for people with HIV/AIDS

We work primarily with gay men, and we are committed also to working with other people and communities directly affected by the epidemic in New South Wales.

Core values

Social Justice

Paramount to the work of ACON is the belief in the rights of social justice for all people including those living with HIV/AIDS. ACON believes that health is a fundamental human right and that people affected by HIV/AIDS have the right and the duty to participate, both as individuals and collectively, in the planning and delivery of their health care.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is special

ACON believes that the HIV/AIDS epidemic is - and will remain - special. This arises from a unique confluence of factors, namely

- transmission of the virus involves sex, drugs and blood - issues society is only slowly learning to deal with openly and calmly
- the societal groups most at risk - gay men, injecting drug users and sex workers are traditionally wary of government and the health system, and subject to prejudice by both social institutions and by individuals

Education

We conduct a wide range of education programs, focusing chiefly on people living with HIV and gay and bisexual men. These are aimed at improving health maintenance among people living with HIV and at promoting safe sex and safe needle use. A diverse range of strategies and techniques is used, including community mobilisation, outreach, peer education approaches, social marketing and information provision.

HIV support and care

ACON uses a range of strategies to promote empowerment of people with HIV/AIDS. This includes community mobilisation and group support strategies as well as the provision of a range of services promoting independence and improved quality of life

- the paradoxical nature of the virus - that it is communicable and the person infected always remains infectious, yet transmission is easily preventable as long as the confidence and the cooperation of those infected and most at risk is retained.

This means that the epidemic requires innovative, challenging - sometimes audacious responses from government, and from the health system.

Community Mobilisation

ACON originated in the gay community in Sydney, and is in itself the primary expression of the community's response to the epidemic.

ACON values its origins and seeks to promote and implement community development strategies which initiate, nurture encourage and facilitate community mobilisation, believing these to be the only effective responses to the epidemic in the long run.

Major areas of work

In order to achieve our Mission ACON initiates, conducts and supports a range of activities in four major areas - advocacy and policy, education, HIV support and care, and human and physical resources. Experience has taught us that, rather than four discrete areas of work, these are areas intimately linked. An effective response to the epidemic requires as much a focus on this interlinking as on work in a particular area.

Advocacy and policy

ACON has a key responsibility in developing and advocating effective HIV/AIDS policy. We work in all areas of HIV/AIDS policy including policy issues and advocacy with government, the health system, the community sector and workplaces. We provide advocacy on behalf of individuals living with HIV/AIDS on a wide range of issues.

for people living with HIV/AIDS. Counselling, peer support, treatment information, home care, housing assistance, legal advice, transport, vitamin and food supplement provision and service referral are major elements in the range of services offered.

Human and physical resources

We work to develop and improve skills of both volunteers and employees in their contribution to achieving our Mission. This includes developing and maintaining an efficient and effective organisation which also fosters and promotes the participation and work of people from affected communities.

Introduction

This booklet highlights key events which have shaped the Australian response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. These events illustrate the extraordinary role affected communities have played in HIV/AIDS advocacy, public health policy, education, support and care.

Building a Community: A HIV/AIDS History is a chronology of the community and government response to HIV/AIDS in New South Wales, a State which can be recognised as having one of the most progressive, common sense and politically bipartisan responses in the world. Unfortunately, this approach has sometimes been marred by rash and ill-conceived government policy; entrenched homophobia and discrimination; public fear and misunderstanding; lack of appropriate funding for essential services; and disagreements about distribution of resources within the affected communities.

The AIDS Council of NSW is the largest community-based AIDS organisation in Australia, and has been at the forefront of the HIV response for more than a decade. It was formed at a public meeting held in February 1985 - almost three years after the first diagnosed case of AIDS in Australia.

Other community-based organisations such as the AIDS Support Group (later Ankali), Community Support Network and the Bobby Goldsmith Foundation began operating during 1983/84, providing welfare and direct care to people with AIDS. Smaller groups such as the AIDS Action Committee (Australia's very first AIDS organisation) and the short-lived AIDS Learning Exchange, along with the gay press, provided the community with information about HIV/AIDS and helped the gay community achieve representation on government AIDS bodies. But what was lacking at the time was a well-established organisation which could respond to the broad social, political and legal ramifications of HIV and develop AIDS education for gay men.

Community AIDS organisations operate in a volatile environment because the epidemic involves issues around sex, blood, drugs and death. It means volunteers, staff and committee members of AIDS organisations simultaneously deal with conservative elements in the community, and face the daily reality of friends, supporters or ourselves becoming ill and dying. The stresses are profound. AIDS has forced Australian society to rethink many of its laws and social mores, and taboo issues are now discussed more openly. If anything good has come from this crisis, it is the fact that affected communities have become stronger, more visible and have survived in the face of great adversity.

This chronology is divided into three periods: the period up to and including the early 1980s; the period 1985 to 1991, which saw rapid growth for the AIDS Council and increasing public attention on HIV issues; and the period 1992 to 1995, the beginning of the second decade of HIV.

The first section places the arrival of AIDS within the perspective of the political climate then facing the gay and lesbian community. This section traces the initial mainstream and gay and lesbian responses to the increasingly grim news coming from the United States.

The second section begins with the formation of ACON in 1985, its period of rapid growth and the issues it confronted in its early years. This section also looks at the emergence of treatments as a political issue; the formation of a HIV community; and the significant policy directions taken by Federal and State governments.

The final section examines the political and community climate in the second decade of the AIDS crisis. It indicates that further legislative reforms are necessary to protect the rights of people with HIV, lesbians and gay men.

The idea for this timeline was conceived in 1993, when it was recognised that ACON's history was not being well recorded. This chronology helps us look back on and learn from the past decade. It also recognises the significant and unique achievements of affected communities and individuals working determinedly to bring the AIDS crisis to an end.

We have attempted to include as many important HIV/AIDS events as possible, but if you feel other events should be listed, please write to ACON PO Box 350 Darlinghurst NSW 2010 and we will include them in an updated edition.

1959 - 1984

A Strengthening Community and an Emerging Epidemic

Early evidence

- By the late 1980s, it became evident to scientists that the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) was around earlier than originally expected. The earliest positive test for HIV antibodies came from stored blood samples taken from British sailors in Africa in 1959. Tests conducted on these samples 30 years later found one of these sailors was HIV positive! Ten years later in 1969, a blood sample taken from a US patient was later discovered to contain the virus.

Homosexual law reform gets a kick start

At the start of the 1970s, it remained a crime for men to practice homosexual sex in every state and territory of Australia. The road to reform was long and very frustrating.

October 1969

- A draft ordinance is drawn up by ACT Law Reform Society to legalise homosexuality in the Australian Capital Territory. It is not until 1975 that the ACT Legislative Assembly passes the Bill and even then the Federal Minister responsible for the ACT does not ratify it.

May 1970

- Federal Liberal Attorney General Tom Hughes advocates homosexual law reform in an address to the Australian Council of Social Services, the first public statement by a government minister supporting such reform.

October 1973

- The Whitlam Labor Government passes law reform in the House of Representatives

September 1974

- A Royal Commission on Homosexuality, announced in Western Australia in July, recommends law reform. However, WA does not decriminalise homosexuality until 15 years later in 1989.

September 1975

- South Australia, under the Dunstan Labor Government, becomes the first state in Australia to decriminalise homosexuality.

February 1977

- The NSW Legislative Council rejects the homosexuality parts of the Anti-Discrimination legislation put forward by the Wran Labor Government in 1976.

August 1978

- The NSW Anti-Discrimination Board releases a five volume report calling for the decriminalisation of homosexuality and the repeal of the Summary Offences Act.

December 1980

- The Hamer Liberal Government in Victoria passes homosexual law reform, the only non-Labor state government to do so.

December 1981

- The NSW Parliament rejects three moves to reform the Crimes Act.

November 1982

- The Anti-Discrimination Act is amended to include homosexuality, making NSW the first Australian state to make it illegal to discriminate against homosexuals.

Gay Liberation paves the way

Unbeknown to the young gay liberation movement of the 1970s, the political activities they were undertaking prepared them for a political response to the AIDS crisis a decade later. The emergence of a visible and strong lesbian and gay community was also to prove important in maintaining the morale of gay men as the impact of the crisis dawned. The major focus of attention for the gay and lesbian community before AIDS surfaced in the 1980's was law reform and the end of discrimination.

July 1970

- Campaign Against Moral Persecution (CAMP) is formed at a public meeting in Sydney.

October 1971

- The first Australian gay rights demonstration attracts 70 people outside NSW Liberal Party headquarters in support of preselection of law reform advocate Tom Hughes.

September 1973

- During a demonstration for Gay Pride Week, 18 people are arrested in Sydney, the first of many large-scale arrests which are to take place throughout the 1970s.

August 1975

- Melbourne hosts the First National Homosexual Conference with 800 people in attendance. The last such conference is held in 1986.

June 1978

- The first Sydney Gay Mardi Gras ends in the arrest of 53 people. Two days later, hundreds protest outside Liverpool Court with seven more people arrested. In related protests over the next 18 months another 100 people are arrested. The saga ends in December 1979 when all charges from the original arrests are dropped and the Summary Offences law is repealed.

September 1980

- In a move which signifies the growth of "community politics", a public meeting agrees to move the Mardi Gras from winter to summer.

January 1982

- The NSW Homosexual Law Reform Coalition is formed by 33 separate groups.

More signs that HIV is on its way

Between 1977 and 1982 medical evidence was mounting that a strange new disease had arrived. Meanwhile, sexual health was becoming a major issue for gay men in Australia.

December 1977

- Dr Grethe Rask, a surgeon who had worked in Zaire, dies in Denmark of Pneumocystis Carinii Pneumonia (PCP). Undiagnosed at the time, she is Europe's first documented death from an AIDS-related illness.

1979

- Pneumocystis Carinii Pneumonia (PCP) and Kaposi's Sarcoma are first reported in gay men in San Francisco and New York.

1980

- A hepatitis B vaccine becomes available in the USA.

June 1981

- *US Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* publishes "Pneumocystis Pneumonia Los Angeles", the first published description of AIDS.

July 1981

- The US Centre for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta establishes a taskforce on KS and other opportunistic infections.
- The first articles on AIDS appear in the Australian gay press. *Sydney Star* also carries extensive article on STDs and internal parasites at the same time.

October 1981

- First reports of US AIDS cases appear in the *Sydney* gay press.

December 1981

- The first AIDS related articles appear in the mainstream Australian press: "Diseases that plague gays" in *Newsweek* and "Opportunistic diseases - a puzzling new syndrome afflicts homosexual men" in *Time Australia*.

MAKE AZT AVAILABLE FOR ALL WHO NEED AND WANT IT

Come to an EMERGENCY RALLY PARLIAMENT HOUSE TUESDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 1987 3:30 PM

ACON has always been at the forefront of treatments activism since AZT became the first treatment for HIV in 1986.

January 1982

- The *New England Journal of Medicine* publishes three studies which link PCP and KS, which are reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.
- The Sydney STD Clinic advertises for gay men to have blood tests for STDs. Five months later a private clinic run by gay doctors once again urge gay men to have a blood test every three months.

April 1982

- In a move that now seems grimly ironic, the Blood Transfusion Service advertises in the *Sydney Star* for gay men to give blood.

June 1982

- The CDC reports the appearance of PCP and KS among intravenous drug users in the USA. A month later it reports the appearance of the diseases in people with haemophilia and, in December 1982, announces that AIDS has been found in people receiving blood transfusions. By January 1983, it is discovered that women are being infected from male partners.

July 1982

The American Public Health Service coins the name Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, which the CDC adopts to replace the term GRID (Gay Related Immune Deficiency Syndrome) the following September.

AIDS arrives in Australia

Eighteen months after the first published description of AIDS, and almost four years since KS and PCP were first reported in gay men in the USA, Professor Ron Penny, who has since become one of Australia's leading medical experts in the HIV/AIDS field, identified the first case of AIDS in Australia in November 1982 - a visitor from America. By this time, 285 cases had already been reported in the United States. The gay community had to mobilise quickly to tackle widening public alarm about AIDS - often characterised and encouraged by a sensationalist mainstream media - and the potential for a backlash against lesbians and gay men.

March 1983

- Labor wins the Federal election. Dr Neal Blewett becomes Minister for Health.

April 1983

- The hepatitis B vaccine becomes available in Australia. Assurances are given that the serum will not transmit AIDS and an information service is established by the manufacturer which includes gay men.

May 1983

- The *Sydney Star* publishes a risk reduction article on AIDS which discusses anal sex and the use of condoms.

- Following news from the USA of transfusion-related cases of HIV, the Sydney Blood Transfusion Service publicly asks "homosexuals" not to donate blood, only 13 months after encouraging them to. The head of the BTS refuses to speak with the gay community and BTS is picketed. As a result, the AIDS Action Committee is formed in Sydney, the first AIDS group in Australia. A meeting finally occurs between the newly formed Committee and the BTS. At the same time, the Health Department begins liaising with the gay and lesbian community.
- Victoria becomes the first state in Australia to make AIDS a notifiable disease. States follow shortly after.
- The Gay Counselling Service hands out an AIDS article from *Newsweek* in an attempt to make gay men more aware of the disease.
- In an article in *Science* magazine, the head of the Institut Pasteur, Luc Montagnier, suggests a human retrovirus causes AIDS.

June 1983

- The *Medical Journal of Australia* reports on the first case of AIDS in Australia.
- Fred Nile, arch conservative and homophobic member of Parliament, calls for the quarantining of gay men. Nile's unreasonable demands prompts the Commonwealth Health Minister, Dr Neal Blewett, to speak out against growing AIDS hysteria.
- The NSW Labor Government forms a Consultative Committee which includes gay community representatives. It also gives St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, \$84 000 to set up a prospective study.

July 1983

- The *Sydney Star* includes an article linking gay bashings to AIDS.
- The first Australian to be diagnosed with AIDS dies in Melbourne.

Responding to the crisis

Following the establishment of the AIDS Action Committee, a number of other groups were formed to respond to the new disease. These new groups were mostly welfare support groups and medical-related advisory bodies. Meanwhile, the number of cases in Australia continued to creep up, while in the USA, Africa and Europe, the epidemic was accelerating at an unrelenting pace. But even with growing public hysteria, law reform for homosexuals was continuing.

July 1983

The Gay Counselling Service forms the AIDS Support Group, which in May 1985 becomes Anka. The Group aims to provide one-on-one emotional support to people with AIDS. In the same month other groups and committees are also started, including the Australian Prostitutes Collective; the Victorian AIDS Action Committee (formed by Melbourne's gay community); and the National Health and Medical Research Centre (NHMRC), an advisory body to Federal government, establishes its first working party on AIDS.

August 1983

- The NSW AIDS Action Committee calls a public meeting in Paddington Town Hall which is addressed by Professors Ron Penny and David Pennington.
- The Sydney AIDS Prospective Study is launched, with the first intake in early 1984.
- The Ninth National Homosexual Conference is the first such conference to deal with AIDS. From the meeting the Australian AIDS Action Committee is formed - the precursor to the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO) - which meets with Federal Health Minister Dr Neal Blewett.

November 1983

- In close consultation with the AIDS Action Committee, the NSW Health Department produces its first pamphlet on AIDS.
- The NHMRC establishes a national register of AIDS cases.

January 1984

- Seventeen cases of AIDS have been reported in Australia.
- Private homosexual acts become legal in the Northern Territory.

March 1984

- Premier Neville Wran and his Police Minister announce the setting up of the Police-Gay Liaison Unit as a part of a Community Relations Unit. Despite this attempt to improve relations between the two groups and the fact that it was illegal to discriminate against lesbians and gay men, the Government still does not pass law reform. Wran is jeered at the 21st Dinner of the Council of Civil Liberties.
- As the AIDS crisis begins hitting the gay community even harder, the Australian Medical Association agrees to remove homosexuality from its list of illnesses and disorders, something the Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists had done 11 years earlier - the first such body in the world to do so.

April 1984

- American scientist Robert Gallo announces that he has isolated the virus which causes AIDS, naming it HTLV -III. This is later recognised as the same virus identified by Montaigner a year before.

June 1984

- Decriminalisation of homosexuality is enacted in NSW, after Neville Wran introduces a Bill into Parliament in May.
- Well-known gay athlete Bobby Goldsmith becomes the third Australian to die from AIDS-related illness. His death focuses the community mobilisation on AIDS. In the following month the Bobby Goldsmith Foundation is officially established - originally known as the AIDS Home Support Service - a service initiated by the Gay Counselling Service in November 1983.

A Gift from the Safe Sex Sluts



The Safe Sex Sluts has been a fun and successful way of distributing safe sex material.

- The NHMRC publishes the first set of HIV-related guidelines for health workers. The Australian Red Cross Blood Bank issues written guidelines for self-exclusion of high risk donors. Three months later the BTS adopts high risk donor guidelines.

July 1984

- A heterosexual male blood recipient becomes Australia's first case of transfusion-related transmission.

August 1984

- The NSW Venereal Diseases Act is amended, making Category A and B AIDS notifiable diseases. This brings the state in line with South Australia, Tasmania, Queensland and Victoria.

September 1984

- The first training course for Community Support Network (CSN) volunteers takes place, a group established to provide practical home care for people with AIDS. CSN also holds its inaugural general meeting which adopts a constitution and elects a management committee.

October 1984

- *The Medical Journal of Australia* publishes an issue on Living With AIDS, which (ironically) features a skull on the cover.

November 1984

- The NSW sperm bank calls on gay men to donate, but the AIDS Action Committee quickly urges gay men not to do so.

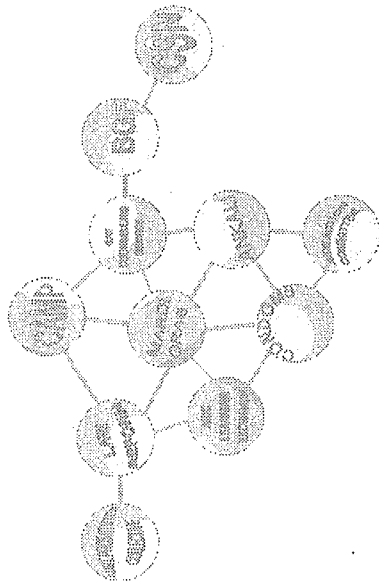
In the middle of a Federal election campaign, the Queensland Bjelke-Peterson National Government announces the deaths of four infants as a result of HIV-contaminated blood and introduces penalties for anyone giving false information on their eligibility to donate. AIDS suddenly becomes a "hot" political issue, with the Federal Leader of the National Party, Ian Sinclair, accusing the Labor Government of being responsible for spreading AIDS. The Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, appeals to all men who have had sex with men in the last five years not to give blood.

- A special meeting of the Australian Health and Medical Council (AHMC) assures funding for securing the nation's blood supply. At the same time \$5 million is allocated for AIDS-specific services, including \$3.7 million in grants to states for education and counselling and support services. Two high-profile government advisory bodies are also established; the National AIDS Task Force, a medical advisory body, and the National Advisory Committee on AIDS (NACAIDS), an educational advisory body. The latter body includes representatives from the gay community and is chaired by high-profile personality, Ita Buttrose.
- The BTS says gay men have stopped donating, leading to a lack of sufficient hepatitis B immunoglobulin, which is available in infected blood.

- The AIDS Learning Exchange, a community-based peer learning and support group, is formed. In the same month Sydney City Council begins a research project into the health and welfare needs of gay men and lesbians. The researcher hired to research the gay male section becomes closely involved in the establishment of the AIDS Council.

December 1984

- An AHMC meeting rejects calls to close gay saunas, as has occurred in large American cities such as San Francisco and New York. Such calls have been common and continue throughout the 80s, not always coming from the traditional opponents of the gay community but also an issue from within the community itself.



1985 - 1991 The Growth of AIDS Activism

The establishment of AIDS Councils

With the "Queensland babies" controversy and issues such as the closing of saunas, it became evident that the gay and lesbian community needed to provide a tougher political response to counter attacks from its political enemies and to safeguard a steadily improving relationship with government and health agencies. As more became known about HIV and AIDS, particularly modes of transmission, education for the affected communities became a dominant need.

January 1985

- Forty-nine cases of AIDS have been reported in Australia.
- The Federal Health Minister visits the US, which results in government intervention to arrange the speedy delivery of a newly available HIV antibody test kit. After seeing the extent of the epidemic there, Dr Blewett is galvanised into ensuring the response to HIV/AIDS is one of the Government's major health priorities.
- Campaign magazine begins a regular AIDS Watch column.

February 1985

- Launch of one of Australia's earliest explicit safe sex campaigns, "Rubba Me", in a steam bath. The campaign is entirely funded by the community groups Bobby Goldsmith Foundation and Gay Counselling Service after the NSW Health Department pulls out.

The AIDS Council of NSW (ACON) is formed after a public meeting. The Council Committee includes representatives from other AIDS organisations including BGF, Ankali, Community Support Network and the Gay Counselling Service. Lex Watson is elected ACON's interim Chairperson. It receives its first funding from the Mardi Gras, which donates \$14 500. The newly formed organisation enters a float in the Mardi Gras parade, which the head of the AIDS Taskforce, Dr David Pennington, supports as a good forum for AIDS education.

- The Sydney Morning Herald prints its longest ever apology following an article which uses blatantly untrue information about people living with AIDS watching the Mardi Gras parade. The article is a prime example of the mainstream media's ignorance when reporting AIDS stories.

March 1985

- ACON receives its first funding from a government when the Commonwealth Health Minister grants it \$74 000, enough to cover one staff worker and rent for premises in

Crown Street. Also, the Sydney Hospital opens the Albion Street AIDS Clinic for AIDS-specific outpatient services, testing and counselling.

- The Government extends Medicare to cover hospital costs for people with HIV.

April 1985

- The First International AIDS Conference is held in the US. At this Conference the virus which causes AIDS is renamed the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).
- The Queensland AIDS Council is established. Until the defeat of the National Government, led by Joh Bjelke-Paterson, in December 1989, QuAIC is to work under exceptionally difficult circumstances. The Government is vehemently opposed to gay law reform, hindering the ability to provide the gay community with health, welfare and education services.
- Australia becomes the first country in the world to secure its blood supply after the BTS starts to screen all its supplies for HIV antibodies. One month later testing by GPs and health services commences in Australia.
- AIDS Councils are also formed in Tasmania, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory over the next few months.

May 1985

- The outgoing President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) issues a statement calling for non-discrimination and a national response to AIDS. This is the first statement by such a body in the world.
- The NSW Government introduces penalties for false declaration of blood donors - \$12 000 or 12 months jail.
- AHMC endorses a National Health Strategy on AIDS Control. The total AIDS budget is now \$86 million, with funding shared between the Commonwealth and the states.

June 1985

- Two public meetings are held to obtain community support for ACON's constitution. Lex Watson is elected the first president.
- ACON holds its first major public activity, an AIDS conference jointly sponsored by the NSW Nurses Association, at Westmead Hospital.

July 1985

- The Federal Health Minister, Dr Neal Blewett, addresses the Gay Rights Lobby Annual Dinner and emphasises the role of cooperation between the gay community and government in confronting AIDS.

August 1985

- The AIDS Action Council of the ACT is formed.
- The NSW Government announces that it will make the results of HIV antibody tests notifiable. There is immediately a drop in attendance at testing centres by members of "high risk" groups. ACON is instrumental in opposition to the proposed Bill.
- ACON secures its first funding from the NSW government.

September 1985

- Public fears and misconceptions about HIV are highlighted in the national media when Eve van Graffhorst, a young child with HIV, is forced to withdraw from her kindergarten on the NSW Central Coast. Community pressure sees her family relocate to New Zealand. Eve dies in 1994.

October 1985

US actor Rock Hudson dies from an AIDS-related illness. As he is one of the first famous casualties, his death focuses world attention on AIDS. In a speech following Hudson's death President Ronald Reagan finally utters the word "AIDS" publicly, with 18 000 Americans now diagnosed with AIDS.

- The first AIDS Candlelight Vigil is initiated by Craig Johnston and Brian McGahen, two gay city councillors.
- ACON sets a precedent by running an information and condom distribution stall at the Sleaze Ball. These booths become part of every Mardi Gras and Sleaze party.
- The NSW ALP Caucus meets with AIDS experts before making a decision on AIDS notification. There are no representative from the gay community present.

November 1985

- The First National AIDS Conference is held in Melbourne, with more than 200 people in attendance. The Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO) is established as an umbrella body of the local state and territory AIDS Councils and affiliated groups to represent them at a national level. The secretariat is originally based in Melbourne, but moves to Canberra in early 1987. The Federal government funds AFAO \$40 700 for the establishment of its secretariat, resources and meeting of national executive.

December 1985

- BGF starts the Foundation Housing Project to provide subsidised accommodation for people with AIDS.
- The 1985 Annual Report of the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board records the first complaints of discrimination based on AIDS.
- The first needle and syringe exchange programs begin operating illegally in NSW.

January 1986

- There are 162 cases of AIDS in Australia, with over 60 percent of this number in NSW. ACON has a staff of six, including one educator and three welfare workers. Its budget from Commonwealth and State sources totals \$200 000.

KEEP IT UP



WE'RE WINNING AGAINST AIDS

The annual campaigns play an important role in creating a safe sex culture in the community. "Keep It Up" was part of the 1990 campaign.

February 1986

- Funding is approved for the Wollongong AIDS Research Project. This study is concerned with the development and evaluation of counselling and support for people with HIV and their carers.

March 1986

- Greg Tillett is elected president of ACON at a special meeting following the resignation of Lex Watson. Working groups are also established: the Welfare Working Group, the Legal Working Group, Publications Working Groups and the Safe Sex Working Group. A Trade Union Working Group is established within the next few months.
- The first edition of *Frontline* is distributed. This health promotion news sheet is originally produced fortnightly with a local, national and international distribution of 5000, mainly gay venues.
- A Virology Research Unit is established at Fairfield Hospital in Melbourne and an Epidemiological and Clinical Research Unit at St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney.

April 1986

- Despite advice to the contrary, State Parliament amends the NSW Public Health Act which makes all categories of AIDS proclaimed diseases.
- ACON holds a public forum on antibody testing. The meeting opposes any moves to make testing compulsory. Three months later a summit on antibody testing - which is attended by the Federal Minister for Health, members of the AIDS Task Force, NACAIDS and representatives from AIDS Councils - agrees that testing should remain voluntary.
- Funding is approved for the ACON/Macquarie University study: Social Aspects of the Prevention of AIDS. The study examines behavioural and social factors amongst Sydney gay men and men who have sex with other men to monitor transmission trends.

May 1986

- ACON runs its first major safe sex education program, the Stop AIDS Project, after six months of planning and training. It is based on a similar project run in San Francisco. Over 60 volunteers pool their talents to produce a 15 minute video, *Do the Right Thing*, an unprecedented resource aiming to trigger discussion about safe sex. The Commonwealth Censor gives the video an R rating.
- Condoms advertisements - brand advertising late at night - are allowed on television for the first time.

June 1986

- A special general meeting of ACON adopts policies on antibody testing and on venues in which sex might occur.

August 1986

- The ACON Resource Centre opens in Sophia Street, Surry Hills.

Promising news at last

Until late 1986 there was little good news about possible treatments, vaccines or cures for HIV. However, the announcement that trials of a new drug, AZT, appeared to be promising brought a new challenge for community AIDS organisations - improving access to and fast tracking drug trials for people with HIV/AIDS. Meanwhile, the number of new infections continued to climb and education remained a high priority. Australia continued to provide one of the most progressive responses to the epidemic, whilst the intervention of the Far Right in the United States saw radical AIDS activism becoming vital for the survival of the affected communities.

August 1986

- The NSW Anti-Discrimination Board begins running seminars on AIDS related discrimination in the workplace.
- Foreseeing rapid growth in the next few years, ACON establishes a five year organisational plan.

September 1986

- In the US, a welcome announcement is made that azidothymidine, more commonly known as AZT, appears to be an effective treatment for some people with AIDS.

The push for legal syringe and needle exchanges is given a boost when the AIDS Task Force calls for easier access to clean needles for intravenous drug users. At the same time NACAIDS adopts a National Education Strategy on AIDS which emphasises the role of community groups in the conception, planning and execution of education strategies.

- GAMMA (Vic) is funded by the Federal Government to produce information and education materials for bisexual and gay married men.

October 1986

- The ABC TV *Hypotheticals* program features "Does Dracula Have AIDS?"
- ACON holds a public meeting on shortage of funds for care and support services, where the rapid increase in demand is resulting in existing resources being stretched beyond their capacity.
- The Second National AIDS Conference is held in Sydney, with a strong emphasis on community-based education and prevention programs.

November 1986

- A Californian proposition in the USA to quarantine those infected with HIV is held. Known as the La Rouché proposition, it is soundly defeated. Another referendum is held in December - Proposition 64 - which calls for the compulsory screening, notification and quarantining of positive people. Again, the proposal is rejected.
- The Australian Prostitutes Collective is funded to provide education programs on sexually transmitted diseases to its target group, making Australia one of the few countries where sex workers have opened an effective dialogue with government.

January 1987

- There are 1 385 cases in Australia and in the US 34 862. ACON now has a staff of 12 and a total budget of \$313 000. Of this \$40 000 has come from non-government sources. An Executive Director position is established and Bill Whittaker is appointed into the position.

February 1987

- ACON holds a forum on the Carer's Pension to pressure the Government into extending it to non-relatives. As the law currently stands, partners of gay men are unable to receive the pension.
- The Gay Men's Health Centre opens in Melbourne, housed at VAC.
- The NHMRC begins the first clinical trial of AZT in Australia. The treatment is not widely distributed at first.
- The first national meeting of AIDS educators is held in Sydney.

March 1987

ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power), a radical AIDS action group, is established in the USA. The US Government has been extremely slow in responding to the AIDS crisis, angering the rapidly growing HIV community. While the Australian case load is still overwhelmingly among gay men, in the US injecting drug users, women and racial minorities make up over 40 percent of those infected with HIV.

- Don Baxter becomes the third ACON president after the resignation of Greg Tillett.
- The ACON People With AIDS group establishes a Vitamin Service which provides cost-price vitamins and nutritional supplements to people with HIV. Also established are the Healthy Lifestyles Working Group and the Media Working Group. In April the Events and Fundraising Working Group is convened for the first time.

April 1987

- In preparation for the start of a NACAIDS advertising campaign, ACON and the other AIDS Councils set up telephone counselling and information services. The \$29 million national education campaign, spearheaded by the (in)famous Grim Reaper television commercial, is the first to directly target the issue of heterosexual transmission and transmission outside of "high risks groups" generally.
- The United Nations passes General Resolution 42/8, a statement on AIDS. Australia is the principal sponsor of the move, the first time ever a resolution about a disease has been debated in the UN General Assembly.

**Do something
with yourself**



One of a series of promotional flyers for the Community Support Network.

- The NSW Government establishes a Ministerial Advisory Committee on AIDS, which includes a representative from ACON. At a national level, the Governor-General of Australia, Sir Ninian Stephen, formally founds and becomes the patron of the AIDS Trust of Australia, a charity established to provide funds for AIDS related education and research projects.

May 1987

- AFAO releases the first edition of a media kit designed to assist reporters get the facts straight on HIV/AIDS. The success of the kit sees two more editions.

June 1987

- Channel 10 Sydney screens *Suzi's Story*, a documentary about Suzi Lovegrove, a woman living with AIDS, and the issues and problems her family encounters. Following substantial audience reaction, it is screened for a second time in July.
- Australian Federal and State governments establish the Inter-Governmental Committee on AIDS (IGCA). The Commonwealth and States also reach an agreement to cost share AZT.
- ACON establishes a Speakers Project which provides volunteer speakers giving presentations on HIV/AIDS to community groups, schools and businesses.

July 1987

- A second clinical drug trials meeting sponsored by ACON signifies an increasing need for AIDS organisations to develop treatment policies and strategies.
- ABC TV's *Four Corners* program features Dr Jonathan Mann, Director of the World Health Organisation's Global Program against AIDS. Australia hosts a WHO regional HIV/AIDS meeting. All South-East Asian and Pacific countries attend.
- ACON holds a community dinner, which heralds the start of an intensive campaign to establish a safe sex culture in Sydney's gay community.

August 1987

- In its budget, the Commonwealth Government revises funding policy to the states. The new formula takes account of population, number of AIDS notifications and Aboriginal population of the State. Fifty percent of funding is provided for education and prevention programs and the other half for non-hospital based care and support programs. The total budget allocation for 1987/88 is \$20 million.

October 1987

- As a result of a report from the NACAIDS Working Group on Gay and Bisexual Men, a report which ACON had considerable input into, the Commonwealth Health Department provides \$500 000 for programs specifically aimed at gay and bisexual men. The first National Gay and Bisexual Men's Workshop is held in Sydney.
- AFAO produces the first edition of the *National AIDS Bulletin*. Originally meant as an information exchange resource for the AIDS Councils, it rapidly grew to become the prominent AIDS publication in Australia.
- The ACON Social Science Research and Ethics Working Group is convened. It aims to monitor any social research the Council is promoting and participating in.

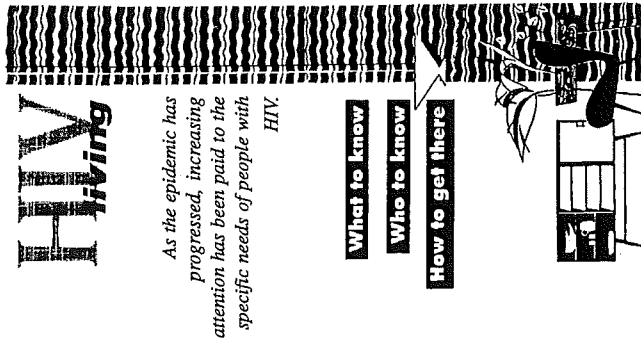
November 1987

- The first AIDS Day Care Centre opens in Sydney.
- As part of its growing involvement in treatments activism, ACON holds a demonstration outside Parliament House to draw attention to the critical shortage of funding for AZT.
- A Needle and Syringe Exchange Program is established in NSW, following the success of a similar program conducted in the ACT earlier in the year.

Changing needs

1987 was a peak year for public "AIDS hysteria", particularly following the *Grim Reaper* campaign. Mainstream media was saturated with AIDS related stories: grim statistics and gloomy forecasts. For the gay community, which had been fighting HIV for five years, there was a danger that many might be tiring of the "safe sex" message. The challenge for AIDS Councils then was threefold - to ensure that AIDS was maintained as a high health priority by all levels of government; that the media improved and continued its reporting of HIV/AIDS issues; and to try to maintain safe behaviour within affected communities. ACON had the added matter of dealing with a new state government, the first time the organisation had to deal with a Liberal/National Party administration.

While education remained a high priority for the Council, a new arm of AIDS activism started to emerge by 1988. Little emphasis had been placed on the education needs of those already HIV positive - prevention had always been the major "public" focus of the Councils. The social stigma, even within the affected communities, of being open about being positive, was still very powerful. The need for this to change quickly became evident and what resulted was the birth of a "HIV community".



As the epidemic has progressed, increasing attention has been paid to the specific needs of people with HIV.

December 1987

- ACON launches a major education campaign in an effort to re-focus on safe sex issues. "Have a Safe Sex Summer" includes posters, leaflets, video ads and a float in the 1988 Mardi Gras and concentrates on sex and alcohol/drug use and sex in relationships. Research suggests that summer is a "high risk" period for HIV transmission, which sees the development of an annual campaign for this time of year. An independent evaluation of the campaign reports that "Have a Safe Sex Summer" is extremely successful and as a result it is used as a model for future campaigns.

January 1988

- With 722 cases of AIDS in Australia, a new classification system comes into effect, following changes in the USA. Gone are the old Category A, B and Cs, in are Category I, II, III and IV.

- ACON now employs 13 staff and operates on a total budget of \$735 000. Rural and beats programs begin. A National Legal Project is also established.

February 1988

- Levinia Crooks becomes the fifth and longest serving president of ACON.
- The Adult Video Industry Association releases a safe sex message to appear on all X and R rated videos. It features an explicit condom demonstration.

March 1988

- Three years after setting them up, the Federal government abolishes the AIDS Task Force and NACAIDS, creating in their place the Australian National Council on AIDS (ANCA) and the National AIDS Forum.
- The Conservative Government of Margaret Thatcher passes Clause 28 in Britain which prohibits local authorities from promoting homosexuality in any way or of funding any group to do so. This has a damaging and enormous impact on HIV/AIDS education in the UK and sets basic human rights back many years. In September, Fred Nile attempts to introduce similar legislation in NSW in an attempt to ban the "blasphemous" Mardi Gras. The motion is adjourned without debate.
- ACON develops a needle exchange strategy and advocates the reform of drug legislation which hinders education outreach.

The Liberal/National Party Coalition is brought to power in NSW for the first time in 12 years. The Call to Australia Party increases its representation to hold balance of power in Upper House along with the Democrats. The future of organisations such as ACON seems uncertain, despite assurances from the incoming government that bipartisanship in HIV/AIDS will remain.

- A code of practice on life insurance policies is drawn up between the Federal Government and the Life Insurance Federation of Australia. However, getting most insurance companies to adopt non-discriminatory policies for people with HIV/AIDS and people in "high risk" groups continues to be a major concern for AIDS organisations.

May 1988

- The Hunter AIDS Forum becomes ACON's first regional branch, ACON Hunter.

June 1988

- A third meeting on clinical drug trials is sponsored by ACON.
- Australia's national airline, Qantas, becomes one of the country's first large companies to adopt a progressive approach towards employees with HIV infection.

July 1988

- The first reports from the ACON/Macquarie Social Aspects of the Prevention of AIDS Project clearly indicate behaviour change among gay men towards safe sex.
- The new NSW Government re-introduces Summary Offences legislation, posing problems for outreach programs to male and female sex workers.

- An unreserved new pamphlet, *Six Tips for Hard Cocks*, is launched by ACON. It proves to be popular within the community, but causes one Federal MP, Michael Cobb, to complain about public money being spent on such explicit literature.
- ACON's Rural Outreach Project commences. It provides men who have sex with other men in rural areas of NSW with prevention education and to support local lesbian and gay groups in providing a response to HIV/AIDS.
- The AIDS Hotline run by the Albion Street Centre becomes toll free, allowing easier access for people in rural areas of NSW.

August 1988

- The Third National Conference on AIDS is held in Hobart. Liberal MP Wilson Tuckey causes outrage with his suggestions that transmitting HIV is akin to drink-driving. Other Liberals at the Conference immediately complain to Opposition Leader John Howard that Tuckey is threatening the bipartisan response to AIDS.
- Brian Burdekin, the Human rights and Equal Opportunity Commissioner, launches the ACON/AFAO-produced *AIDS and Your Rights* pamphlet at the Third National Conference. It is the first comprehensive legal guide for people with HIV, health workers and others affected by HIV/AIDS.
- The first Living Well Conference for People Living With AIDS is held in Melbourne. This is the first time a national conference specifically for HIV positive people takes place and heralds the birth of a "HIV community" in Australia.
- A NSW Parliamentary Liaison Committee on AIDS is established. All parliamentary parties are represented, including the Call to Australia Party.

September 1988

The 1000th AIDS case in Australia is reported. Five hundred people have died since the first case was diagnosed in 1982.

- ACON produces a special poster for the arrival of a large number of foreign sailors visiting Sydney for the Bicentenary. "Sailors, Sydney is a high risk area for AIDS" urges the visitors to always use condoms and to inject safely. Also produced is *Know Your Health Status*, a booklet designed to assist people make informed decisions about antibody testing and monitoring their health status. One of ACON's most successful information leaflets, *Safe Sex and AIDS*, is published for the second time. A fourth edition is expected in early 1995.
- A private benefactor donates six flats to ACON to accommodate for people with HIV. Renovations are completed and the units become operational in February 1989.
- The Youth Peer Education Project, which provides peer support for young gay men under 26, commences operation.
- The first meeting to establish a People Living With AIDS (NSW) Coalition is held.

October 1988

- Members of the Tasmanian Homosexual Law Reform Group (established in April) are arrested at the directive of Hobart City Council. The Council revokes their license to have a stall in Salamanca Place, but the Group refuse to move. Over the

- next two months 130 people are arrested and marks the beginning of a law reform struggle which continues for the next six years.
- The first Australian conference on AIDS for sex workers takes place in Sydney.

November 1988

- ACON's second branch is established in Lismore. Originally called the North Coast Branch, it was renamed the Northern Rivers Branch shortly after the commencement of a Mid-North Coast Branch in 1992. The Western Sydney Beats Outreach Project also starts in November, which targets public areas where men met to have sex with other men.

December 1988

- The first edition of *Talkabout*, the newsletter of PLWHA (NSW), is published.
- ACON participates in the first World AIDS Day, which has been established by the United Nations to improve public awareness of the epidemic.
- TV stations refuse to run a new Commonwealth advertisement, featuring a series of couples in bed, unless the homosexual couples are removed from the visuals. The Commonwealth caves in.
- The Australian Quilt Project, a visual memorial to those who have died from AIDS inspired by a similar project in the US, is launched in Sydney by Ita Buttrose. The idea for an Australian Quilt was conceived by Andrew Carter.
- The Federal Minister for Health admits that a small-scale pilot AIDS screening project had been conducted in 1986/87 targeting African immigrants. None are found to be positive.
- ACON launches its second summer campaign, "Outliving, Outloving, Outlasting", the first major campaign to provide information on treatments, drug trials and lifestyle choices for HIV positive people. It also contains the now familiar messages on safe sex and safe injecting. The campaign even includes a 12-inch recording!

January 1989

- Australia has 1168 cases of AIDS and over 6300 people have been infected with HIV. In the USA, 80 538 cases of AIDS have been reported and it is estimated than almost 1 million people have HIV. In Africa almost 21 000 cases have been recorded and 16 883 in Europe. Asia still has relatively small figures, but they do not take into account a large pool of HIV infections that are not officially recorded.
- ACON staff increases to 33, including 14 in education projects and seven in community services. The total operating budget is \$1.43 million, of which \$77 000 has come from non-government sources. To respond to the changing demands placed on the organisation, ACON develops its first short-term strategic plan.

February 1989

- A second Living Well Conference is held in Sydney. The NSW AIDS Bureau also holds a conference for NSW HIV/AIDS educators in the same month, in which ACON staff give a number of key-note speeches.

March 1989

- With the expansion of staff, ACON occupies a second building at 391 Riley Street, the first of two times in its history that ACON Sydney operates from two different buildings. Riley Street is occupied by the Community Services Unit. In the same month ACON employs its first Women and AIDS Project Officer. While this is the first such paid position, a Women and AIDS Working Group has been operating since 1988. A Positive Women's Group is also established.
- The Australian AIDS Memorial Quilt is displayed at Parliament House, Canberra.
- Community Support Network conducts its first training session in the Hunter region.
- The second Gay and Bisexual Men Educators' Conference is held in Sydney.

April 1989

- The Intravenous Drug Use Working Group is established.
- ACON installs a telephone typewriter (TTY) for communication with Deaf and hearing impaired people. The number is advertised in an AIDS video and other resources produced for Australian deaf communities by the Deaf Society.
- ACON North Coast provides speakers to local community groups.
- Controversial US orthopaedic surgeon Lorraine Day addresses a Doctors' Summit on AIDS. Day offers speculative and misleading research about occupational transmission in health workers. Due largely to the work of groups such as ACON and AFAO, however, it does not become a major issue to result from the Summit.

May 1989

- The HIV Support Project starts operating from the Riley Street office. The two major aspects of the Project are facilitated support groups which set their own agendas; and regular information nights which inform and update HIV positive people about a variety of issues relevant to their health and welfare. Terry Giblett, the driving force behind the setting up of the Project, becomes the first project officer.
- ACON is funded to provide a transport service for people with HIV/AIDS to hospitals, day centres and clinics. The service, later to be called Tiffy's Transport, is originally administered by Central Sydney Community Transport but came under direct control by ACON in June 1992.
- Don Baxter, ACON Education Programs Manager, participates in a special WHO planning workshop on preventative education for gay and bisexual men in Geneva. In the following weeks, Executive Director Bill Whittaker and ACON President Levinia Crooks both present papers at the Fifth International AIDS Conference in Montreal which highlight the work of community organisations in Australia's response to AIDS.
- Zambia's President Kaunda, speaking at the Fifth International Conference, calls on all governments to make AIDS the number one public health issue. At the same conference, a large group of people living with HIV/AIDS take over the stage and ACT UP New York releases a proposal for a "parallel track" development of drugs.
- People Living With HIV/AIDS (NSW) receives its first government funding for a part-time Administrator and part-time Newsletter Coordinator, both situated in the ACON Resource Centre.

July 1989

- The National Treatments Project begins operation. It is initially funded through a levy of AFAO members and later receives funding from the Commonwealth Government. The Project acts as a clearing house of treatments information, reports on and evaluates orthodox, alternative and experimental drugs and provides advice to the HIV community, governments and the medical profession.

A National Strategy

The bipartisan response by Australian governments was consolidated with the release of the first National HIV/AIDS Strategy in August 1988. For the first time AIDS organisations were ensured committed funding over a four year period. ACON and AFAO had substantial input into the development of the government document, particularly in the original discussion document AIDS: A Time to Act, A Time to Care. ACON and other AIDS organisations were to undergo substantial growth between 1989 and 1991, particularly at the beginning of 1990. AIDS activism in Australia also reached a peak with the arrival of ACT UP, reflecting the fact that treatments and treatment access for people with HIV was now high on the political agenda.

August 1989

- ACON commences a concerted media campaign to lobby for approval of use of AZT among asymptomatic HIV positive people, following the completion of US trials. It takes a year for the Government to approve it.

The Commonwealth Health Minister, Brian Howe, presents the Government's White Paper on HIV/AIDS, to the Federal Parliament, which discusses a national strategy to deal with the epidemic and emphasises the necessity for governments, affected communities and the medical profession to work together. AIDS organisations are generally happy with the White Paper, yet remain concerned about areas such as treatments, prisons and immigration.

September 1989

- A HIV infected gay bridge player is refused a visitor's visa by Australian immigration officers in San Francisco. This happens within days of the release of the White Paper, which supported antibody testing for immigrants. The Commonwealth Health Minister intervenes and overturns the decision.
- A prostitute, Charlene, is detained under public health laws allowing for detention of those knowingly spreading an infectious disease, after she appears on 60 Minutes. None of her clients who have sex without condoms are detained. The Government goes on to establish a lock-up facility, heavy fines and one month detention period for people in Charlene's position. The media, of course, have a field day. ACON adopts a very vigorous stance against such draconian penalties.
- Simon Ferguson loses a case he brings before the Equal Opportunities Tribunal after being asked to submit for an AIDS test because he was found to be gay prior to undergoing surgery. The decision demonstrates the inadequacy of current anti-discrimination measures for people with HIV.

years. The NSW Minister for Health, Peter Collins, officially opens the new building later this year in July.

- The “Step by Step” campaign begins. With the development of antiretroviral treatments and prophylactic interventions, increasing importance is placed on health maintenance for HIV positive people. Step by Step discusses their treatment options. A second component of the campaign is a discussion about deciding whether to have an antibody test. The campaign marks a turning point in ACON policy regarding testing for HIV, as the benefits of getting tested increasingly outweigh reasons not to test.

March 1990

- ACT UP Sydney is formed following a meeting about treatments called by PLWA (NSW). Other states respond shortly after and create local chapters. Most of ACT UP's energies are directed towards improving and speeding up drug trials and other treatment issues.

The ACON Legal Working Group organises the first National Legal Workshop, attended by 100 people from law and law related occupations.

- The ACON Library starts operation. It becomes part of the AIDS Library Network, a group of five libraries which specialise in HIV/AIDS related literature. the ACON Library itself specialises in social and psychological aspects of HIV/AIDS, education, policy, legal issues and treatments.

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- The Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP), administered by ACON but with an independent steering committee, starts operation from the old ACON premises at 391 Riley Street, with six workers providing HIV related education and support services to workers in the sex industry. The Steering Committee includes representatives from sexual health clinics and prostitute rights organisations.
- The Labor Party wins an historic fourth term at the Federal election. After seven productive years in the Health portfolio, Neal Blewett is replaced by Brian Howe. Relations between the new Minister and community AIDS organisations are strained more regularly than his predecessor, particularly over treatment access.

April 1990

- The Commonwealth Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Tribunal is empowered to investigate employment related discrimination complaints by people with HIV/AIDS and homosexuals.**

February 1990

- 30

Action needed on drugs and discrimination

While treatments had been on the political agenda of AIDS groups for some time, a new issue was also emerging as a major challenge. Eight years into the epidemic discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS remained rife. Several areas of discrimination had been subject to action and advocacy by AIDS organisation. With an increase in people with HIV becoming more open about their status, the extent of discrimination was even more obvious. AIDS lobby groups once again had to pressure governments to act.

May 1990

- After substantial community pressure, Federal Health Minister Brian Howe establishes a review to examine approval delays of treatments and clinical trials.

June 1990

- Legislation is passed in NSW to introduce compulsory antibody testing for prisoners, despite a concerted effort by ACON and other community and human rights groups to prevent such a law being passed.
- Just days before the Fifth International Conference on AIDS starts in San Francisco, seven people are arrested outside the US Consulate in Sydney. The ACT UP rally is held to protest US travel restrictions against people with HIV. Numerous Australian and international groups boycott the Conference.

July 1990

- ACON Executive Director Bill Whittaker resigns after almost three years in the position. He is replaced by former president, Don Baxter. Whittaker becomes the President of AFAO.
- ACON opens two more branches - ACON Illawarra in Wollongong and ACON Mid-North Coast in Coffs Harbour. ACON Mid-North Coast does not receive funding until later in the year, with its first coordinator being employed in July 1991.

August 1990

- The Fifth National Conference on HIV/AIDS is held in Canberra along with the first AIDS in Asia and Pacific Conference. At the Fifth National Conference, ACT UP demonstrates against Australia's drug approval system, taking over the stage in key note speeches. In the same month the Commonwealth Government announces that it will conduct a campaign targeting HIV/AIDS related discrimination.
- The provision of AZT to people with less than 500 T-cells is approved. The first ddI trials in Australia commence the following month.

September 1990

- ACON holds a Women and AIDS Forum which discusses priorities and issues for women in all areas of HIV education and support services. It also releases its report *Trialing, Approval and Marketing of Treatments and Therapies for HIV/AIDS Related Illnesses*, aimed at reforming Australia's drug approval system.
- Rolf Petherbridge replaces Levinia Crooks as president of ACON.

October 1990

- The NSW Government Standing Committee on Social Issues is given reference to look into compensation issues for those with medically acquired HIV.
- ACON employs a half-time Evaluation Officer to build formal and ongoing evaluation into all ACON projects and to assist staff develop planning and evaluation skills.

November 1990

- ACON Illawarra starts its Beats Outreach Education program. A Spanish counsellor commences at ACON Sydney, providing emotional support to Spanish-speaking people affected by HIV/AIDS. The counsellor is also involved in SACBE, a Spanish-speaking community based HIV education and support organisation.

December 1990

- ACON launches its new summer campaign, "It's Our Right", targeted at reaffirming gay and lesbian rights in combination with affirming the rights of people with HIV/AIDS. The campaign is more "low profile" than in previous years, focussing on community support for HIV positive people, sustaining safe sex within particular situations and the visibility of the gay and lesbian community. Much of the campaign is designed in response to HIV positive people who feel their needs are neglected in education strategies.



One of the issues the 1991 "It's Our Right" campaign addressed was the critical problems with Australia's drug approval system.

- ANCA Working Party on Treatments recommends sweeping changes to Australia's system of drug approval and marketing.
- The US Secretary of Health and Human Services removes HIV infection from the list of diseases under which immigrants or foreign visitors can be excluded from entering the US.

January 1991

- Over 14 417 Australians have been infected with HIV, of which 2347 have AIDS and 1406 have died.
- ACON's expansion continues with staffing levels reaching 70. The budget approaches \$4 million, with \$364 000 being non-government funds. ACON employs Megan Mkwanziri to conduct a three-month research project to examine the needs of women with HIV in Australia. Resulting from this report is the creation of a position within the HIV Support Project specifically to deal with positive women. The Gay Injecting Drug Use Project, which addresses transmission and education issues for gay men who inject drugs, commences in January. Two years later it is expanded to include outreach to lesbians and is renamed the Gay and Lesbian Injecting Drug Use Project (GLIDUP).

- The Commonwealth Government accepts a limited number of recommendations of the report of the ANCA Urgent Working Party on Treatments and announces yet another inquiry to be conducted by Peter Baume, ex-Liberal Party Senator.
- Launch of the *Australian HIV/AIDS Legal Guide*, a resource for lawyers and people working in the HIV/AIDS field. It is produced by the National Legal Project.

February 1991

- ACON launches the "We Can't Wait!" campaign. One of ACON's most political campaigns, it demands urgent action on treatment access for HIV positive people. In the 1991 Mardi Gras Parade a large and prominent We Can't Wait contingent is enthusiastically received by the crowd and achieves wide spread media coverage. Also launched in February is *Breaking the Isolation*, a training manual for facilitating HIV support groups.

The Therapeutic Goods Act is amended, allowing people to import treatment drugs from overseas for their personal use. Amounts are limited to a three month supply, but nevertheless an important avenue for people with HIV/AIDS is opened up.

- The Commonwealth Government launches the "That Feeling" campaign, the first national AIDS media campaign targeted directly targeted at gay and bisexual men.

March 1991

- With the rapid growth it has experienced since 1989, ACON commissions Common Ground Consulting to conduct an Organisational Review.
- A Canadian drug company challenges Burroughs Wellcome in a Canadian court over Wellcome's patent of AZT. The challenging company claims it can produce AZT at a third of Wellcome's price.
- The NSW Government provides funding for the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project in the face of an alarming increase in violence against the community.

April 1991

- A short-term project, the National Deaf Project, which provides access to HIV/AIDS information for deaf people outside of Victoria and NSW, commences at ACON. A volunteer peer support group for women partners of bisexual men starts meeting.

May 1991

- The Legal Working Group holds a seminar on hospital HIV testing for Law Week.
- ACON establishes the first Australian Buyers' Club which allows for the personal importation of HIV/AIDS treatments not yet approved in Australia.
- In a surprise NSW election result, the Coalition is returned to power as a minority government in both Houses. In the Legislative Assembly three relatively progressive Independents, including gay supporter Clover Moore, hold the balance of power while in the Legislative Council the Democrats and ultra-conservative Call to Australia Party hold the balance.

- AIDS Candlelight Memorials are held in over 250 cities around the world.
- The West Australian Government is the first Australian government to announce compensation of \$5.4 million to those with medically-acquired HIV.

June 1991

- ACT UP holds a D-Day campaign on HIV/AIDS treatments. Simultaneous demonstrations are held in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra. The Canberra rally is held outside Parliament House, where red flares are lit. Some protesters manage to infiltrate the building and absell into the House of Representatives, where Prime Minister Bob Hawke is giving a speech.
- The first National HIV Positive Women's Conference takes place in Sydney. Overseas, in a speech given at the Seventh International Conference on AIDS in Florence, the outgoing head of the WHO's Global Strategy on HIV/AIDS, Dr Jonathon Mann, says the impact of AIDS in the 1990s will be worse than it was in the 80s.
- Andrew Carter, the founding member of the Australian AIDS Memorial Quilt Project, and Keith Harbour, former president of the Victorian AIDS Council - both outspoken gay men with HIV/AIDS - are made members of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honours list. Both are to die within two months.
- ACON holds its first major dance party since the 1980s. Called "The Party", its success leads to the event becoming the organisation's major annual fundraiser.
- ACON establishes a Prisons Working Group with activists from a range of organisations to develop a comprehensive strategy for addressing the range of HIV/AIDS related issues relating to prisons and to establish programs to assist HIV positive prisoners to improve their quality of life. The North Coast Branch conducts a three month pilot beats project in the Lismore region.

July 1991

- The Commonwealth Government releases the report of the Baume Inquiry into the evaluation and approval of treatments for marketing in Australia. The report moves significantly towards the changes AIDS groups have been lobbying for for many years. The Government commits itself to implementing all the recommendations.

August 1991

- After considerable pressure from organisations such as ACON and PLWHA (NSW), the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board finally conducts an inquiry into HIV-related discrimination. ACON lodges a 100-plus page submission which outlines over 500 cases of discrimination.
- ACON launch a campaign to alert gay men of an outbreak of Hepatitis A in the Sydney gay community. Along with Wellcome Australia and the Victorian AIDS Council, it also launches a new HIV testing and treatments campaign. The campaign features gay men with HIV/AIDS, with all funds provided by Wellcome - the first time a pharmaceutical company in Australia contributes to the fight against HIV/AIDS in such a way. It is based on a similar campaign by Wellcome in US.
- The Centre for Disease Control in the USA redefines conditions for an AIDS diagnosis. It now includes people with fewer than 200 T cells.

September 1991

- Levinia Crooks becomes president of ACON a third time, replacing Rolf Petherbridge.

October 1991

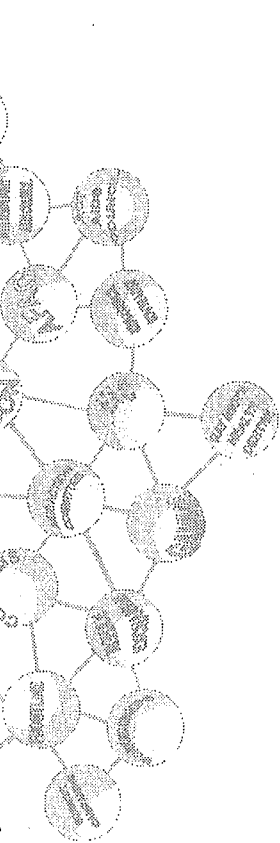
- The NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues releases findings of its inquiry into medically acquired HIV. The report recommends the establishment of a financial assistance scheme limited to those who were directly infected through medical procedures in public hospitals.
- The Mature Age Gay Men's (MAG) Project starts at ACON. It offers support and education to gay men and men over 45 who have sex with other men and fosters networks amongst these men.
- The National People Living With AIDS Coalition publishes the first national information booklet for people with HIV/AIDS.
- The Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations officially adopts a charter which formally recognises its special relationship with the gay and lesbian community.

November 1991

- Ten years into the epidemic a survey by the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health finds that people have more sympathy for those whose lifestyle leads to heart, lung or liver disease, than for people with HIV/AIDS.
- The ACON Women and AIDS Project launches its "We Want Safe Sex Now..." campaign, one of the organisation's first major education campaigns directed specifically at women. The campaign consists of a series of four posters and an accompanying brochure and discusses reasons why women want to have safe sex.
- A HIV Education Needs Assessment starts at ACON. The eight month NSW-wide assessment investigates the education needs of HIV positive people. Over 400 people take part. When the assessment is completed ACON is able to recognise priorities and develop appropriate services and programs to meet these needs.

December 1991

- The drug ddI is approved in Australia within six weeks of its approval in the US under the changed system for drug evaluation and approval. It is only the second antiviral to be approved in ten years and is only approved as an alternative to AZT.
- The Victorian State government announces a compensation package for people with medically acquired HIV/AIDS whose cases have a good chance of succeeding should they be taken to court.



Attacks and promises

Throughout the AIDS epidemic conservative elements of the medical establishment have accused gay men of "hijacking" AIDS policy direction in Australia and, in return, those most affected by HIV have expressed concern that the medical establishment have attempted to control the debate. This issue reached a peak in 1992 with a concerted attack on the gay community by eminent ophthalmologist, Professor Fred Hollows. Meanwhile, with evidence of widespread discrimination against people with HIV and violence against gay men and lesbians, the effort to bring about the most extensive legislative changes since decriminalisation intensified.

January 1992

- 3096 Australians have been diagnosed with AIDS, 1952 have died. Gay men still make up almost 90 percent of cases. Meanwhile, 15 679 Australian are HIV positive, 617 of whom are women.
- ACON now has a staff of 97 and operates on a total budget of around \$5 million, with \$430 000 raised within the community.

February 1992

- The 1991/92 campaign, the last to concentrate specifically on the summer season, is launched with the theme "Our Love". This campaign celebrates the culture of difference within the gay community but reinforces that we also share common responsibilities and needs.

March 1992

- The First National Aboriginal Conference on HIV/AIDS is held in Alice Springs. At the Conference Professor Fred Hollows calls for quarantining of people with HIV to prevent transmission into Aboriginal communities. His views are roundly condemned. Hollows intensifies his attack over the next month, raising the spectre of the "gay lobby" and immunologists hijacking the AIDS debate and funding.
- ACON adopts the recommendations from the Organisational Review. The old structure of Executive, Administration, Community Services and Education is replaced with the creation of seven new units - Executive; HIV Strategy and Support; Community Development; Care, Housing and Transport; Peer Education; Policy Coordination and Information Unit; and Finance, Administration and Human Resources. An Organisational Development Team is also formed to oversee the transition to the new structure. A Joint Consultative Committee, a forum to discuss a range of issues which impact on the work of ACON, consisting of representatives from the management, staff and union, starts meeting monthly.

- The ACON Women and AIDS Project launches a new poster, "The woman with AIDS is not who you think - she's the girl next door", which encourages women to find out more about HIV/AIDS. The poster is adapted from Toronto.

April 1992

- The HIV Community Working Group is set up in response to some dissatisfaction with key areas of ACON's services and procedures. It provides an avenue for input by HIV positive staff and volunteers in formulating ACON policy. Out of this working group, HIV Sensitivity Training for all staff and volunteers was initiated.
- Despite prior warnings from PLWHA (NSW) and ACON, a shortage of acute care beds reaches crisis point throughout NSW, but particularly at St Vincent's. The two organisations hold a successful public meeting to allow community members to put their views directly to the Government and hospital administrations.

- The NSW Anti-Discrimination Board release its report on HIV/AIDS related discrimination. *Discrimination - The Other Epidemic* calls for changes to the Act to ban discrimination on grounds of HIV. In all there are 72 recommendations made. The Government promises to form an implementation committee.

May 1992

- The Australian Medical Association sponsors a doctors' summit, "AIDS: Have We Got It Right?". Professor Hollows speaks at the conference, but with papers presented by people with HIV, researchers and community leaders much of the "hijacking" debate disintegrates. Federal Minister for Health, Brian Howe, commits himself to continuing with the existing National Strategy.
- Sydney's participation in the Annual International Candlelight Rally continues to enlarge, with 3000 people in attendance.

August 1992

- The NSW Government finally announces the committee which will review the Anti-Discrimination report into HIV/AIDS related discrimination. ACON is represented on the committee by Peter Grogan. AIDS groups express concern at the extremely slow pace of the process.
- The HIV/AIDS Legal Centre (HALC) starts operating from the ACON office. The new community legal centre was formed following a significant increase in the caseload of the AFAO Legal Project.

September 1992

- ACON introduces a Complaints System, providing a mechanism for people using ACON services to comment on what the organisation does.



ACON offers general and specific support services and information to HIV positive and negative women.

- ACON opens an office in Blacktown, Western Sydney, to provide education and support services to gay men and men who have sex with men in the outer western suburbs. Peter Grogan is elected president of ACON, replacing Levinia Crooks.

October 1992

The drug ddC is licensed for use within Australia. AIDS community groups have been extensively involved in negotiations with the Therapeutic Goods Administration and Roche Australia about the supply of the drug.

November 1992

- The Fifth National HIV/AIDS Conference is held in Sydney.
- The NSW Attorney General, John Hannaford, promises the "AII I Want for Christmas" rally of gay men and lesbians that his government will introduce anti-vilification legislation to protect gays and lesbians and all people with HIV/AIDS. ACON co-sponsors the rally.

December 1992

- Community fund raising on World AIDS Day yields a record \$250 000.
- With an increase of staff due to the provision of short-term Commonwealth funding, ACON opens a second office at 55 Oxford Street. Meant as a short-term measure, the organisation is housed in the two offices for two years. The Deaf Project is not refunded, hampering ACON's ability to work with deaf clients.
- With the National Strategy running out in mid-1993, AFAO releases *Beyond 1993*, a discussion paper for the next national strategy. ACON contributes to the paper.

January 1993

- More than 3697 Australian AIDS cases have been reported, with 2404 deaths and 16 513 people diagnosed HIV positive.
- ACON's staff now stands at 120 with the annual budget reaching \$6.1 million. Community raised funds total \$400 000.
- The Federal Government launches its major print and television advertising campaign "HIV doesn't discriminate, people do".
- The NSW AIDS Bureau launches its Health Promotion Plan.

February 1993

- The Evaluation Report of the National AIDS Strategy is released.
- A Volunteer Policy is adopted by ACON to introduce strategies for more effective involvement of volunteers throughout the organisation. The Policy Coordination and Information Unit is divided into two new units - the Policy and Project Development Unit and the Information and National Projects Unit. ACON is funded for the Women Partners of Bisexual Men Project.

A positive sexuality emerging

With the growth of the HIV community in Australia a whole new range of lifestyle issues were emerging for people with HIV. One of these was the right to lead a fulfilling and unhampered sex life - there were few, if any, campaigns which portrayed people with HIV in a positive sexual way. Added to this was the notion that people with HIV were burdened with the responsibility to ensure transmission of HIV did not occur. The myths surrounding these issues seemed to be quite entrenched in the gay community and ACON now had to actively dispel them.

March 1993

- Amendments to the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act which makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of HIV or AIDS in housing, employment, education and the provision of goods and services come into effect.
- The NSW Premier, John Fahey, makes a statement clarifying his personal and his government's commitment to current HIV/AIDS strategies and programs.
- The Keating Labor Government is returned for another term in a Federal election. Senator Graeme Richardson becomes the Federal Minister for Health.

May 1993

- *Talkabout* magazine publishes a special on Positive Sex in which people with HIV discuss their sexuality.
- At the launch of the 1993 Annual Campaign, "Let's Face It Together", there is a strong protest from HIV positive people that they are invisible in many ACON education campaigns. The 1993 Campaign focuses on four major themes: safe sex, HIV related grief and loss, safe injecting and community strength.

Independent MP Clover Moore introduces a Homosexual Anti-Vilification Bill into the NSW Legislative Assembly. It passes the Lower House, but in the Legislative Council Liberal MPs and all but one member of the National Party vote against the Bill to defeat it by one vote. The Government indicates that it is preparing its own similar legislation, including HIV/AIDS anti-vilification.

- ACON releases a HIV Employment Policy which sets out an affirmative action strategy to employ more people with HIV.

June 1993

- ACON starts an International Working Group to advise on international policy issues and respond to requests for training and information from overseas. ACON becomes an associate member of the International Gay and Lesbian Association in July. Several short-term projects get under way including the National HIV Anti-Discrimination Project, which investigates ways of empowering people with HIV who might be isolated by class, language or culture; the Rural Anti-Discrimination Project, which HIV positive people in rural areas to be informed and educated about discrimination issues; a newsletter coordinator for rural gaze, the newsletter of the ACON Rural Project; a project officer to develop support services for HIV positive Asians; and a project to develop resources for young gay men with HIV.

- An AFAO-funded national advertising campaign for young gay men gets substantial media interest. The ads appear in a number of youth and gay magazines.
- Fred Nile announces he will review his support for Government bills in the Upper House unless anti-vilification legislation is dropped.
- The Australian Centre for Gay and Lesbian Research at Sydney University is opened by Governor General Bill Hayden.
- Activism in the 90s, the inaugural conference of the Australian Centre for Gay and Lesbian Research, is held.
- The annual Stonewall March traces the route of the 1978 march which heralded the arrival of Mardi Gras. This time there is no police harassment, no arrests.
- Expiry of the first National Strategy on HIV/AIDS.

July 1993

- ACON's Women Partners' of Bisexual Men Project holds a one-week phone in for women partners to find out about support services. Over 60 calls are received.

August 1993

- A Gay Men's Project, Man 2 Man, commences at ACON. The new project designs, implements and evaluates a range of educational strategies which address the current needs of inner city gay men.
- A by-election for the blue-ribbon Liberal seat of The Hills is promoted by Fred Nile as a mini-referendum on anti-vilification legislation. Call to Australia candidate Bruce Coleman polls lower than ever before, with only 4.4% of the vote. The *Sydney Morning Herald* runs an editorial "Free Speech in Unstable Times" arguing against the proposed vilification legislation.
- The Commonwealth Government doubles funding for expensive HIV treatment drugs in its 1993/94 budget.

September 1993

- There are indications that the Fahey Government's proposed anti-vilification legislation is stalling. Fred Nile reiterates his threat to block government legislation if the Government continues to pursue anti-vilification protection for gays and lesbians. Several days later the Government announces the bill is not to proceed but is to be reconsidered in a more extensive review of anti-discrimination legislation. It is roundly and widely condemned for caving in to pressure from Nile.
- ACON begins to formulate a Strategic Plan for the next five years.
- Following input from ACON, the NSW Department of Housing releases a new policy which includes provisions for people living with HIV to remain in private accommodation and receive rental assistance.
- ACON is one of the sponsors of a 5000 strong rally outside the NSW Parliament in the pouring rain to protest the Government's back down in anti-vilification. Fahey's compromise of reintroducing the HIV anti-vilification clauses only is rejected by the rally. In the Legislative Council former Police Minister, Ted Pickering, crosses the floor to vote against the Government - the first time he has done so in 17 years - to bring on debate on Moore's bill now re-presented by Democrat Liz Kirkby. Fred Nile promises to filibuster until Parliament adjourns for the year.

- ANCA holds a two-day workshop on preventive vaccines in Sydney. The following month ACON conducts a public meeting to provide feedback to the community about proposed trials.

October 1993

- The Second National HIV/AIDS Strategy is launched. Its adoption by Parliament is delayed by the Mabo debate and problems getting the Federal budget through the Senate. A major aim of the strategy is to reduce the number of infections to less than 300 per year; it reinforces the right of people with HIV to be included in all areas of planning for HIV/AIDS programs and services.
- A report to the Federal Government finds the superannuation industry has no evidence to justify the exclusion of HIV positive people and that such exclusion could be considered illegal.
- Two thousand gays, lesbians and their supporters rally in support of anti-vivification. Ted Pickering again crosses the floor to vote against the Government in the Upper House to restore Moore's bill for debate.
- The Second National Conference on HIV and the Law is held in Melbourne.
- Following community concerns about the rise in incidence of tuberculosis in Australia - particularly in relation to HIV/AIDS - ACON holds a public meeting to identify the issues TB raises.

- ACON's Venues Outreach Project, Speak Easy, commences. Workers and volunteers speak to men in bars about safe sex, support and health maintenance. ACON also conducts a grief and loss survey in the *Sydney Star Observer*, with 1400 questionnaires returned. It identifies the need for more counselling services which deal specifically with coping with grief.

November 1993

- The NSW Parliament passes the Health Care Complaints Bill, which ACON has extensively campaigned for. The Bill gives broader powers to investigate complaints about health care delivery by the Department and other health agencies. In the same month the Homosexual Anti-vivification Bill is finally passed in the Legislative Council after Ted Pickering joins the Labor Party and Democrats in passing the Bill.

December 1993

- Cleo magazine includes a brochure produced by ACON's Women and AIDS Project. The leaflet discusses why condoms are the only effective contraceptive against both pregnancy and HIV.
- AFAO moves from Canberra to Sydney following an organisational review.

January 1994

- 4530 Australians have been diagnosed with AIDS. 3017 have died. Over 17 568 Australians are HIV positive.
- After nine years of continual growth, ACON's staff remains at 120 (51 of which are part-time) in six branches and the annual budget falls back to \$5.5 million. ACON begins its Staff Appraisal and Development Program (SADP) which formalises procedures for the review of staff and management work performance.

- A tri-state STD/HIV treatment and education project for aboriginal communities begins. South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory take part.
- Fred Nile unsuccessfully attempts to introduce a Conscientious Objection Bill into the Legislative Council. The Bill would allow health workers to refuse to undertake certain medical procedures on "moral" grounds. ACON's Legal Working Group is one of many groups which makes submissions arguing against the Bill.
- In a submission to the NSW Legislative Council's inquiry into youth violence ACON argues for more resources for young people with HIV and lesbian and gay youth.

ACON enters its tenth year

When the AIDS Council was first formed in 1985, we all hoped there would be no need for it in 1995. Yet as ACON entered its tenth year of mobilising and coordinating a community response to HIV, it found itself facing new challenges as well as old. More than ever, ACON found itself having to defend the money being spent on HIV/AIDS in a tightening of government health spending. The burden of ten years of friends and associates dying was taking its toll. And as the fight entered its second decade, a major re-think on education strategies became necessary.

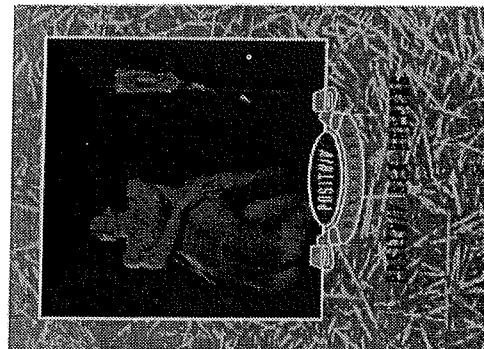
February 1994

- ACON employs its first Media Liaison Officer with funding from the AIDS Trust of Australia, allowing it to take a more proactive role in publicising its services and responding to issues picked up by the mainstream and gay and lesbian media.
- A series of four positive sexual images for and by people with HIV is launched. The ACON campaign, PositHIV Sex, is developed from a concept by Andrew Morgan and promoted the fact that HIV positive people have a right to, and continue to, lead fulfilling sex lives. Also launched during February is the 1994 Annual Campaign, "Choose Safe Sex - HIV Positive or Negative".

- The national media is instrumental in stirring up a "breast cancer v. AIDS" debate following comments made several months earlier by the Prime Minister's wife, Anita Keating. ACON takes a proactive role in arguing against claims that too much money is spent on HIV/AIDS at the expense of breast cancer research, saying that comparing death rates was not a practical way to determine funding.

March 1994

- Federal Health Minister Graeme Richardson threatens to cut funding to the *National AIDS Bulletin* following an issue on positive sexuality featuring a provocative cover.



A series of images were developed in 1994 promoting sexuality issues for people with HIV.

- The National HIV Surveillance Report indicates that the number of women becoming HIV positive is climbing quite rapidly. In the same month, ACON's Women and AIDS Working Group secure representation on the Community HIV/AIDS Trial Network (CHATN) and the AIDS Trust of Australia fund a free-call "screeline" providing an opportunity for positive women, particularly those in isolated areas of NSW, to find support.
- A new agreement is finalised between ACON and Community Support Network, streamlining the administration of CSN. ACON also releases *In inverted commas*, a collection of stories about young gay men with HIV. The booklet discusses the emotional and practical issues the young men face.

April 1994

- Health Minister Senator Graeme Richardson resigns from Parliament. Dr Carmen Lawrence takes over the portfolio.
- A national Health Monitoring and Maintenance Project for people with HIV starts.

The Courage of Our Convictions, a report on HIV law reform in NSW by former Senator Chris Puplick, is released. The report calls for a dramatic overhaul of laws which hinder the provision of HIV/AIDS services and education. The Fahey Government stalls on implementing the recommendations.

- A report from a UK study suggests AZT may not be as useful in slowing progress to AIDS as first thought.
- ACON implements a Client Code of Practice, which ensures clients are provided with an appropriate level of service and encourages people to make full use of, and be part of, the service ACON offers. ACON finalises its five year Strategic Plan, which provides the framework and direction for our work through 1998.
- A United Nations Human Rights Committee decides that the Tasmanian Liberal Government contravenes a human rights treaty signed by Australia by maintaining anti-gay laws. The Federal Government can now override the state laws.
- The issue of compulsory testing for surgical patients surfaces once more in the Sydney press following the news that patients in an Eastern Suburbs practice have been infected with HIV via contaminated equipment.

May 1994

- The HIV Support Project launches the HIV Information Forum Package. The Project has been running regular information nights for five years and the package collates the numerous issues covered in those forums into the one resource.
- Within the first few days of taking on her new portfolio, the Federal Coalition spokeswoman on Health, Bronwyn Bishop, suggests AIDS funding is too high. She is quickly replaced by Michael Woolridge as Opposition spokesperson on HIV/AIDS.
- HIV anti-vilification legislation passes through the NSW Parliament. Last minute lobbying by PLWHA (NSW) and ACON prevents the Government from passing a less effective version of the original legislation.
- An attitudinal survey conducted by ACON's Rural Anti-Discrimination Project reveals that, 12 years into the Australian epidemic, there is still extensive

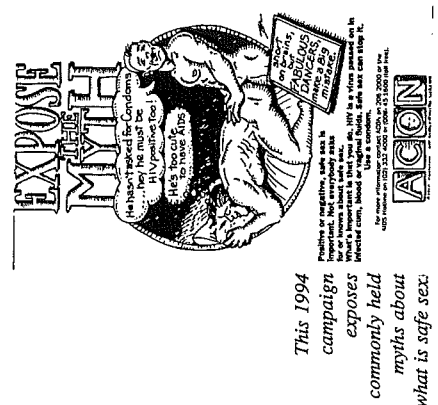
- discrimination or lack of interest in HIV/AIDS amongst many rural GPs.
- An article which appears in the *National AIDS Bulletin* accuses the state and territory AIDS Councils of playing down the risk of transmission of HIV among lesbians and blatantly ignoring lesbian issues.
- Twelve thousand people attend the annual Candlelight AIDS Memorial.

June 1994

- Community Support Network marks a decade of providing hands-on care for people with AIDS in their homes. The Bobby Goldsmith Foundation also marks its tenth year of providing financial assistance to the HIV community.
- ACON's Women Partners of Bisexual Men launches "Do you think your partner could be having sex with other men - You are not alone", a poster and pamphlet campaign which provides women partners with information about where they can find support. It also discusses safe sex.
- The Federal Government re-launches the HIV/AIDS discrimination campaign.

September 1994

- ACON launches its "Myths" campaign, a long-term three stage project which confronts commonly held misconceptions about people with HIV and how HIV is or is not transmitted. Works by three HIV positive artists are commissioned by ACON: the myths posters by Andrew Thomas Clarke; murals for sex premises by David McDiarmid; and Self-Portrait with Drip by Brenton Heath-Kerr.



October 1994

- ACON staff vote in favour of a new industrial agreement.
- ACON's Euthanasia Working Group publishes *Choosing to Die*, a discussion resource about making the choice to euthanase. Written by Paul van Reyk, the initial print run is "sold out" within a fortnight. The book stirs major media interest and brings the euthanasia debate to the fore.
- Long overdue refurbishment of the AIDS ward at St Vincent's Hospital gets under way.

November 1994

- A new approach to ACON's education strategy occurs with the printing of the "Fucking Without Condoms" insert in the *Sydney Star Observer*. The insert discusses circumstances in which gay men might choose not to use condoms and the issues they should take into consideration when making such decisions. The new approach steers away from the "black and white" approach to safe sex which has been the basis of education since the beginning of the epidemic.

- The *Don't Leave Me This Way - Art in the Age of AIDS* exhibition opens at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra. It showcases art by HIV positive artists and how they have responded to the epidemic through their art. Education and political posters also feature in the exhibition. There is some criticism that the government money used to fund the exhibition could have been better spent in the provision of services.
- ACON Sydney moves to its new premises at 9 Commonwealth Street in Surry Hills. The NSW Government offers the building to the Council for a rent of \$1 a year for ten years.

December 1994

- The Federal Government passes historic legislation which enshrines the right to sexual privacy, overriding Tasmania's anti-gay laws.

January 1995

- PLWHA (NSW) and ACON hold a public meeting following growing concern about the slow approval of Zidovudine, a treatment drug for the eye disease CMV. Federal Health Minister Carmen Lawrence is roundly condemned for not signing the approval before going on holiday. She cuts her vacation short after the mainstream media picks up the story. A second public meeting in early February sees the reforming of the AIDS Treatments Action Group (ATAG), a lobby group which monitors the approval and accessibility of AIDS drugs.
- St Vincent's Hospital and the NSW Government sign an undisclosed funding agreement. ACON welcomes the capital funds injection but expresses concern that the details have not been made public and that there is no scope for community groups to have input into the agreement.
- After years of pressure by AIDS groups - led by ACON and AFAO - the three major superannuation insurers remove HIV exclusion clauses from group entry schemes.

February 1995

- The Chief Minister of the Northern Territory announces he is thinking of introducing a private member's bill which would decriminalise euthanasia, making the NT the first place in Australia to consider such legislative reform.
- Former ACON Executive Director Bill Whitaker criticises community AIDS organisations and governments for a poor response to the education needs of gay men in Australia, pointing to anecdotal evidence which suggests gay men continue to have unsafe sex.
- The Second National Positive Women's Conference is held in Sydney.
- ACON launches its 1995 Annual Campaign, using a construction site theme "Sydney Safe Sex Zone". The major issue addressed by the campaign is myths surrounding withdrawal (pulling out before cumming). The Premier of NSW, John Fahey, officially opens the new ACON building.

COUNSELLING

ACON offers a free and professional counselling service - including a Spanish speaking counsellor - to anyone living with or affected by HIV/AIDS. If you are unwell and unable to come to ACON, special visits can be arranged. To make an appointment with a counsellor, please phone the Client Liaison Team on 206 2043. To speak to a counsellor, ring 206 2018 or 206 2019.

HIV LIVING INFORMATION

HIV Information Forums are free and run every Wednesday evening from 6.30pm, covering a wide range of topics, including the latest information on drugs and drug trials, complementary therapies, legal issues, pension eligibility, HIV positive sexuality and international travel for people living with HIV/AIDS. The Project can also provide important and often difficult to access information regarding these issues for people living with HIV/AIDS. Phone or drop in for a chat. For more information about the Forums, check the Sydney Star Observer or Talkabout magazine or phone Steve on 206 2011.

HIV SUPPORT GROUPS

These groups give you the chance to meet others with HIV, exchange ideas and make friends in a supportive and caring environment. Run by the HIV Support Project, they meet for about two hours a week, run for eight to ten weeks and are conducted by two trained HIV positive facilitators. The topics for discussion are entirely up to group members and confidentiality is assured. To find out more about the groups, give Les a call on 2062014.

HOMECARE

The Community Support Network (CSN) trains dedicated volunteers to provide practical care in the home to men, women and children who are experiencing illness or physical complications from HIV/AIDS. Care services include household jobs like cleaning, cooking, gardening and ironing, babysitting, petwalking, shopping and basic personal care, including massage. The numbers for the CSN office are 206 2031, 2032, 2033 or 2035. If you would like to take part in the intensive four day CSN training programme to become a carer, call Graeme on 206 2048.

HOUSING

The ACON Housing Project offers help with accessing priority public housing, transfer advice, homelessness, private rented housing and housing discrimination and harassment. It also administers houses and units clients who are waiting for public housing. To make an appointment for Housing call the Client Liaison Team on 206 2043.

INFORMATION TEAM

The recently-formed Information Team distributes information to a wide variety of individuals, organisations and community groups, as well as within ACON itself. The team aims to raise the profile and community awareness of ACON's services for people with HIV/AIDS and others affected by HIV. The team also monitors and provides information, leaflets and posters on HIV transmission and prevention. Ring Janet on 206 2024 or Megan on 2062023.

ACON HUNTER

The Branch provides a range of education, outreach, counselling and support services to gay men and men who have sex with other men and people with HIV/AIDS in the Hunter area.

CSN trains and coordinates volunteers to provide practical, physical and emotional support and services for people with HIV/AIDS living in the Hunter area. Contact the Branch office in Newcastle on (049) 293 464.

ACON ILLAWARRA

The Branch provides education, outreach and community development programs for gay men, MSMs, and people with HIV/AIDS in the Illawarra area. CSN service co-ordinates and trains volunteers to provide practical and physical care for people with HIV/AIDS. The Branch is located in Wollongong. Contact (042) 261 163.

ACON MID-NORTH COAST

The Branch provides education programs to gay and MSMs in the Mid North Coast Region of NSW. A needle and syringe exchange service is located at the Branch as well as information on HIV/AIDS and referral to other services. The Branch is located at Carra Harbour. Contact (066) 514 056.

ACON NORTHERN RIVERS

The Branch provides specific support services to people with HIV/AIDS and targets gay men and MSMs through education and community development programs. A vitamin service, needle and syringe exchange and resources are located at the Branch. The Branch is located in Lismore. Contact (066) 221 555 for further information.

ASIAN PROJECTS

ACON offers a number of different support and referral services for Asian men and women.

Silk Road is a social group for gay and bisexual men which meets every Friday night. It provides support and education and raises awareness within the gay Asian community. Call Arnel on 206 2080.

Supporting Positive Asians (SPA) is a voluntary group providing support and assistance to men and women in the Asian community who are affected by or living with HIV/AIDS. Volunteers are trained to provide information, referral, emotional support and education services. Phone 206 2036.

Yum Cha is a support group for HIV positive Asians which meets every Thursday at 7pm. The group offers emotional support and information on a range of issues in an informal and confidential space. Ring Arnel on 206 2080.

CLIENT LIAISON TEAM

This team, working very much on the "frontline" of the AIDS Council, liaises with clients phoning or visiting and refers them to the appropriate project. Client Liaison Officers make appointments for clients for the Counsellors and the Housing Project and undertake other referral work. Contact the Client Liaison Team on 206 2043.

LEGAL SERVICE

The HIV/AIDS Legal Centre (HALC) provides free advice and assistance on all HIV related matters, including discrimination and harassment, wills, superannuation, confidentiality and employment. Legal advice sessions conducted by volunteers operate every Monday night. The demand for such an invaluable service and limited resources means HALC is always looking for new volunteers. Comprehensive training is provided. If you need legal advice or would like to be a volunteer with the Legal Centre, ring 206 2060.

INJECTING DRUG USERS

The Gay and Lesbian Injecting Drug Users Project (GLIDUP) addresses injecting and drug issues through outreach to minimise the transmission and impact of HIV on gay men and lesbians. Call 206 2074 or 206 2096.

LIBRARY

The ACON Library is one of the five libraries that link up to form the NSW AIDS Library Network. Our library specialises in education, social and psychosocial aspects of HIV/AIDS, policy, legal issues and treatments and keeps an impressive collection of books, journals, videos, newspaper clippings, pamphlets and posters. An appointment is necessary to access the library which is currently open Monday to Thursday, Ring Meryl on 206 2041 or Susan on 206 2047.

MAN 2 MAN

Man 2 Man liaises with men who have sex with men and offers them workshops and information on relationships, safe sex practices and topics like body image. Steve from Man 2 Man can be reached on 206 2078.

MATURE AGE GAY MEN

This Project puts men over the age of forty and who have sex with other men in touch with each other to form social and support networks. MAG meets at ACON on the second and last Saturdays of each month at 6.30pm and publishes a regular column, "The Best is Yet To Come", in the *Sydney Star Observer*. To get in contact with MAG, come along to the meetings or give Steve a call on 206 2072.

POSITIVE WOMEN

This Project provides women living with HIV/AIDS safe, confidential support and referral on a non-judgemental basis. Support is available in groups or on an individual basis. Call Vienne or Jacqueline on 206 2012.

RURAL PROJECT

The Rural Project provides information and services to people with HIV/AIDS, gays and lesbians in country NSW. The Project can provide listings of supportive doctors, health care workers and care and support services in rural areas. It also provides access to current treatment information. Up-to-date news on local lesbian and gay social groups and events is available, as well as a regular bi-monthly newsletter, rural gaze. The Rural Project also conducts peer education training sessions and can further assist people by advocating for their rights and make referrals to other ACON services. Give Rob or Nigel a call on 206 2082 or 206 2106 or call free 008 802 612.

TALK EARLY TREATMENTS

Thinking about starting treatments for the first time? Want to know more about being in control? Jamie can help you sort out your options (in confidence of course). Call toll free on 008 816 518.

TRANSPORT

If you are living with HIV/AIDS and need regular transport to the hospital or clinic, Tiffany's Transport will pick you up from your door, get you there on time and drop you home afterwards. The service operates daily from 7.30am through to early evening. There is a service fee of \$1 a day, but if you're a bit strapped for cash you don't have to pay. For more details call 206 2040.

VENUES

Speakeasy is a project that aims to reach men at gay venues, such as clubs and saunas, and offer them an informal HIV/AIDS education service in the community. Call Garry on 206 2065. If you run a gay venue and would like to ensure you have the latest safe sex packs and information for your clients, call Steven on 206 2086.

VITAMINS

The ACON Vitamin Service which operates 9.30am until 6pm, Monday to Friday, providing cost price vitamins and nutritional supplements for PLWHAs. Clients wishing to access the service must first obtain a prescription from their doctor, nutritionalist or naturopath as these products should be used under medical supervision. People with a sickness benefit or disability support pension card can buy some products at half price. For details please phone 206 2043.

WOMEN AND AIDS

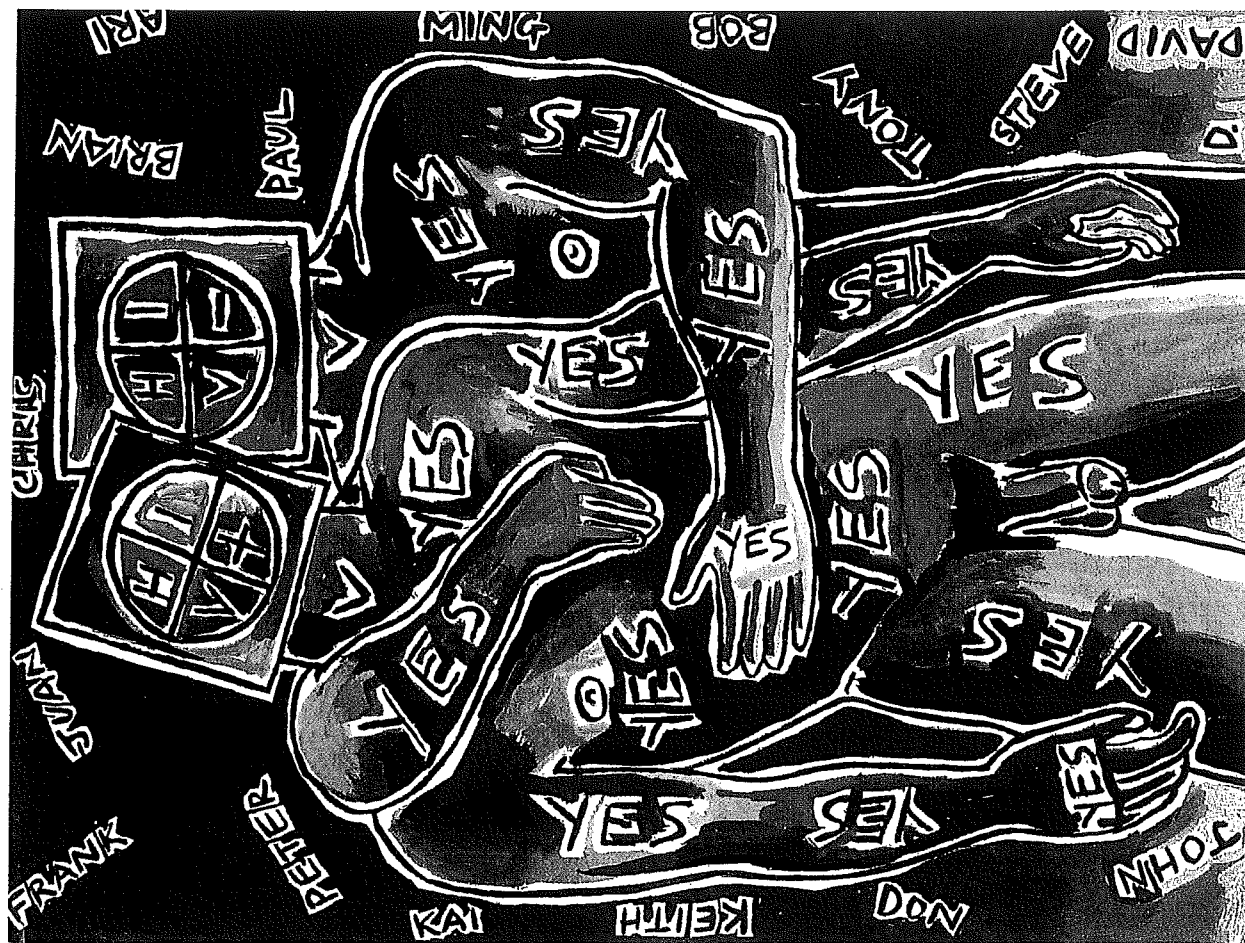
This Project provides a focus on women's issues and can resource workers in women's health and HIV/AIDS organisations. It also provides referrals for women on HIV/AIDS issues and develops state wide education, policy and resources for Positive Women, women as carers and women at risk in the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Call Suzanne or Shan on 206 2049.

WOMEN PARTNERS OF BISEXUAL MEN

Do you think your partner could be having sex with men? You are not alone. There is totally confidential and friendly support and information available for you and the many other women who are in a similar situation to yours. Groups run for and by women partners of bisexual men occur regularly. Women can share feelings of confusion, stigma, loss and isolation as well as ideas and experiences. If you would like assistance call Sara on 206 2026.

YOUNG GAY OR BISEXUAL MEN

Drug queens, condoms, safe sex or boyfriends are just some of the things you might discuss in a Start Making Sense workshop, run by ACON's Fun and Esteem Project. If you're under 26, think you might be gay or bisexual and would like to meet other guys going through similar experiences, Fun and Esteem offer you a great new social and support network. Give Aldo or Brad a call on 206 2077.



STRENGTHENING the COMMUNITY

ACON & the HIV epidemic in NSW