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**Navigating quality of life: the experiences of  
new and temporary migrants living with HIV**

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**Peer Navigation**

**Implementation**

**Trial**

# Background

- Peer and community-based approaches have long been recognised globally as critical to the success of any HIV response (UNAIDS, 2007).
- Stigma and discrimination burden the quality of life experienced by people living with HIV in Australia. Particularly, new and temporary migrants (Ziersch et al., 2021).
- A variety of psychological and social processes underlie the effects of peer-based approaches, such as peer navigation (Solomon, 2004).
- Most HIV research focuses on individual behavioral effects related to specific continuum of care outcomes (Krulic et al., 2022).



People living with HIV and AIDS Victoria founding members Peter Charlton and Chris Carter at AIDS Walk Albert Park 1989 (source: Living Positive Victoria archives).

# Methods

- We interviewed 27 clients of the program, of whom 15 were living in Australia temporarily or for less than 5 years.
- Interviews were recorded, transcribed and thematically analysed (Braun and Clarke).
- The W3 Framework (Brown and Reeders) and earlier stages of data collection informed which client groups to target and the interpretation of results.
- Other analyses consider the experiences of women, heterosexual and bisexual men in more depth.

# Sample characteristics

Table 1. New and temporary migrants (<5 years)

		n
<i>Country of birth</i>	East Asia	2
	Southeast Asia	4
	South Asia	3
	South America	4
	Sub-Saharan Africa	2
<i>Age</i>	18-24	1
	25-34	8
	35-44	3
	45-54	3
<i>Gender</i>	Cisgender women	4
	Cisgender men	10
	Non-binary	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>

Table 1. Cont.

		n
<i>Sexuality</i>	Bi+	2
	Gay	8
	Heterosexual	5
<i>Time since diagnosis</i>	< 1 year	2
	1 year	5
	2-5 years	4
	> 5 years	4
<i>Source of referral</i>	MSHC	8
	Infectious Disease Clinic	3
	Community health	2
	Internet search	1
	Internal/community	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>

# Findings

## Peer navigator relationships offer...

- Hope and reassurance
- Acceptance and belonging
- Practical insights and advice for life with HIV
- Connections to community and services

# Hope and reassurance

“Knowing that [she] is a person that’s living with it is just like, I don't know. It just made everything real for me.

“She’s telling me that I’m going to be okay, and she’s telling me like with a smile on her face. With that confidence that she has. It makes me feel that it's going to be like that. I can be like her. I can be like that positive and one day maybe I will be helping people.”

- **Marco, queer and non-binary, aged 25-34, born in Chile.**

# Acceptance and belonging

“It’s taboo to talk about this kind of thing. It's never acknowledged and the stigma is very bad.

“It just brought me down. It's completely destroyed my character, my confidence, everything... I didn’t want to walk out of the house. I thought, you know, if people saw me, they would automatically assume that I was HIV positive because I had lost so much weight.

“Being around women, especially women who, you know, have the same diagnosis, like it helped a lot...You just don’t know how much it's helped me.”

- **Eloise, heterosexual, 45-54, born in Papua New Guinea.**



# Insights for life

“What will I explain to my parents in [the] future? He gave me the perfect solutions. He gave his real-life experiences, and I was like it’s pretty good like you are a person of similar cultural background and everything. It’s helping me with everything.”

- **Ishaan, bisexual, aged 18-24, born in India.**

# Generating connections

“My English is not good. Sometimes it’s very hard for me to make a phone call to explain my situation. When I talk about my current situation to [my navigator] he will help me to make some phone calls and explain my situation. That’s very good for me.”

- **Johnny, gay, aged 25-34, born in China.**

“I have a good connection when they're from Eritrea or Ethiopia, yeah. We’re kind of friends now, [we] contact each other...Yeah, I give them advice.”

- **Alana, heterosexual, aged 45-54, born in Eritrea.**

# Key points and tensions

- Peer navigation programs are a safe and accessible way for new and temporary migrants to find reassurance, acceptance and belonging at any point in their journey.
- Addressing the harm caused by HIV discrimination in the migration system would be a low-cost investment in our public health (AFAO, 2021).
- Engaging in peer support and collaborating with navigators can be an inspiring, empowering way to overcome stigma and improve quality of life for people living with HIV.

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**Thank you**

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