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QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THORNE HARBOUR HEALTH

No 21

WOMEN IN OUR COMMUNITIES



Photo by Maya Sugiharto - Agent Morphe

We have a long road ahead of us when it comes to addressing the health and wellbeing of women in our LGBTI communities. Thankfully, this year has seen some significant strides forward across the organisation.

At the start of the year, we conducted our first LGBTIQ Women's Health Survey. Over 300 women completed the survey during Midsumma and ChillOut. The survey asked questions around a range of topics including: STIs, cancer screening, mental health, relationships, discrimination, sex and sexuality. The findings of the survey will provide insight into the development of our first LGBTIQ Women's Health Strategy.

Meanwhile in March, we partnered with Positive Women Victoria to recognise International Women's Day and National Day of Women Living with HIV by hosting a morning tea at the Positive Living Centre on Friday 8 March. Our new Director of Services, Carolyn Gillespie, and Positive Women Victoria's Heather Ellis were keynote speakers alongside featured feminist spoken word artist Fleassy Malay. The day recognised the achievements and contributions women have made in the health sector and the work that continues to be done by both organisations.

March also saw the launch of Scope, a series of peer-facilitated workshops for lesbian, bisexual and queer women (trans and gender diverse inclusive) to address and discuss relationships and sexuality. The first session of Scope explored the participants' relationship with identity and self, as well as the relationship participants have with their community. Additional one-day sessions of Scope are planned over the coming months and longer workshops are planned for later in the year.

In April, evaluation of *Public Cervix Announcement*, our cervical cancer screening campaign in partnership with Cancer Council Victoria, gave us some staggering results.



The campaign was developed after research showed around 1 in 5 (20%) Victorians with a cervix, who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, same-sex attracted, transgender, or who have an intersex variation, have never had a Pap test. Created to encourage everyone with a cervix to screen for cervical cancer, the campaign saw a massive 7843% increase in the amount of visits to the Cancer Council Victoria cervical screening website in just two weeks!

Following the success of the campaign and demonstrated need for cervical screening messaging, *Public Cervix Announcement* will be rolled out again later this year.

RESPONSE TO HOMOPHOBIC LAWS

From 3 April, Brunei has implemented laws that include the death penalty by stoning for offences such as adultery and gay sex. We added our voice to the global outcry against these laws as a violation of human rights.

In a public release on Friday 29 March, we said:

"Thorne Harbour Health unequivocally condemns Brunei's adoption of laws that include the barbaric treatment of sexuality and gender diverse people, and calls on the Australian Government as well as the broader community to take swift and decisive action to protect our gender, sex, and sexuality diverse communities."

While Australia's Smartraveller website noted the change in penal code and that the new laws would apply to Muslims, non-Muslims, and foreigners even when boarding Brunei registered aircraft, the national resource for Australians travelling overseas still advised to "exercise normal safety precautions". This prompted CEO Simon Ruth to call for action.

"The Federal Government must immediately revoke Royal Brunei Airlines right to land in Australia to keep sexuality and gender diverse Australians safe from Brunei's new laws. There should also be a review into the effectiveness of Government's travel warnings for LGBTI people."

"And it goes beyond government action - we need to take action collectively to say laws specifically punishing our LGBTI communities for being who they are have no place in society."

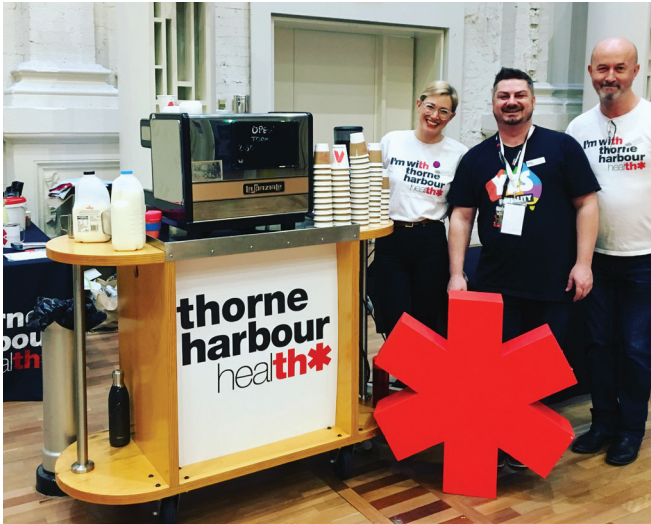
In addition to calling on the Australian Government to rescind Royal Brunei's permissions to fly to Australia, the organisation called on Melbourne Airport to no longer accept flights from Royal Brunei Airlines as well as large travel centres like Flight Centre and STA Travel to immediately stop selling their flights, prompting STA to announce it will no longer work with the airline.

The International AIDS Society has also released a statement on the issue and outlined the impact of anti-gay laws on the global response to HIV and AIDS.

"Homophobia continues to be a major barrier to ending the global AIDS epidemic. Fear and persecution foster a hostile environment that undermines efforts of HIV programmes."

Victorian community member Neil Pharaoh organised an online petition, and Thorne Harbour is encouraging its members and the broader community to sign it in support of our LGBTI communities:

<https://www.megaphone.org.au/petitions/ban-royal-brunei-airlines-from-australia>



COFFEE ANYONE?

You may have seen our volunteers pouring coffees from our commercial coffee cart at recent LGBTI events including the Rainbow Festival in Geelong, Frolic Festival in Ballarat and the AGMC conference. It's all part of an exciting new project here at Thorne Harbour.

The commercial machine, originally donated by Monte Coffee and gifted to the Positive Living Centre has had many lives. Previously, it was set up at PRONTO! to help make the testing experience at the peer-led rapid testing site a more relaxed one.

Once again, new life has been breathed into the coffee cart as part of a new project to equip our volunteers with barista skills. The project sponsors volunteers to attain a Barista Certificate in exchange for hours performed making coffee for staff, clients and visitors. The initiative has been a great way to engage with semi-retired volunteers, PLC clients, and international students,

"It's been a great opportunity to engage with international students in particular," said Volunteer Coordinator Daniel Bryen.

"We get to introduce them to Thorne Harbour and they get employable skills in exchange for donating their time. In fact, two volunteers have already gone on to gain part time employment while they undertake their studies."

The project is currently on the look out for a commercial coffee grinder and exploring sponsorship options for coffee beans.

If you can help with either of these or if you have an upcoming event that could do with our coffee cart volunteers, get in touch with Volunteer Coordinator Daniel Bryen on (03) 9865 6700.

GOOD HEALTH EMEN8s

True to the legacy of Australia's HIV response, rather than waiting for the people to come to us, Emen8 goes where they are. And these days, that's online!

Celebrating its 2nd birthday in May, Emen8 is our national HIV and sexual health education program produced in conjunction with ACON. And it's been a hugely successful year for the joint venture — Emen8 has been growing its audience and advancing its mission to engage, entertain and educate a diverse range of gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men through social media, dating apps and other digital platforms.

Continuing its content marketing approach, this year has seen the Emen8 brand expand its online presence to post more content to more people, more often! Sharing carefully curated content from third party publishers enables Emen8 to spark conversations about a broad range of topics that appeal to our audience. It's also [a handy way to sustain an ongoing narrative about sexual health matters](#), integrating Emen8's homegrown content and health promotion messages into [everyday conversations that matter to our communities](#).

Today's digital age is not just about the written word. Video content is exploding on social media and Emen8 is at the forefront of this trend, now producing our own video content. From [celebrity interviews covering HIV disclosure](#), stigma and the benefits of an undetectable viral load, to celebrating a year of PrEP on the PBS... not to mention some eye-catching animations and cheeky slogans for one of our boldest testing campaigns to date!



We've also taken the hassle out of finding a good sexual healthcare provider, finding many of them all across Australia. Our new, fully interactive map helps connect guys with good sexual health services for rapid, peer-based and comprehensive HIV and STI testing — whether that's nearby wherever you are right now, or in any state and territory for wherever you're going to be. Fancy, huh!? Check it out here: emen8.com.au/find-a-service/

You can keep up to date with all the latest and greatest news and information on sexual health, fitness, entertainment, events, travel, sex, dating, and so much more... [Simply find us and follow us on Facebook: Emen8](#)



TRANSFORMATIONS

In the lead up to Trans Day of Visibility, we held *Transformations* — a forum about trans and gender diverse research. The event brought in approximately 50 people to hear from Dr Ada Cheung and Jeremy Wiggins at the Cancer Council of Victoria. Jeremy spoke on recommendations from his Churchill Fellowship which investigated best practice in trans health. He also reported on his national research project with the Kirby Institute on the sexual health of trans and gender diverse people. Meanwhile, Dr Ada Cheung presented on research done in collaboration with Equinox, as well plans for future studies.

You can also hear from Dr Ada Cheung who joined the team on *Well, Well, Well* on JOY later that week. Stream it online at: joy.org.au/wellwellwell/2019/03/trans-health/ or listen to the podcast (now available on both iTunes and Spotify).



MEET SKYE

Why did you decide to come on board as SAMESH's Team Manager?

The sexual health sector is one that I feel very passionate about, and I have been a firm advocate for sexual health in my community work, so

turning that advocacy into a career seemed like a very natural progression. My background is in the disability sector so advocating for underrepresented and stigmatised communities is incredibly important to me.

What do you think are some of the most pressing issues faced by SA's PLHIV and LGBTI communities?

The almost complete defunding of PLHIV programs in South Australia is a major issue at the moment. And as always, stigma is a very pressing issue. The stigma of living with HIV, the stigma of taking PrEP, the stigma of actively engaging in frank discussions regarding sexual health. I love Adelaide, but it can be a very conservative town and we continue to fight for more progressive ideals.

SAMESH has now been up and running for a few years, what progress have we seen in that time?

SAMESH has a great team behind it, and they have done some wonderful things with the community since 2015. Some of the greatest progress I think has been one of visibility and inclusion. SAMESH supports many of the LGBTIQ events and groups in Adelaide, giving them a platform and a venue to be themselves and feel safe. At the same time we've been building relationships with and supports for people living with HIV thanks to our close work with PLSA, we've developed programs that foster connection and support for our PLHIV communities.

What projects or events are you looking forward to at SAMESH?

I'm very excited to see the Sexually Adventurous Men project approved by SA Health, as it is a community I have been involved with for almost two decades, and we have several very exciting events coming up. We have also made some headway into some traditionally resistant venues so I am excited to see these relationships mature.

What's one fun fact about yourself that people might not know?

I'm a fashion historian with a collection of over 300 pieces of historic fashion dating from a dress from the 1740's to an Alexander McQueen from 2000. This hobby has led me to become a major benefactor of the Art Gallery of South Australia as I donate pieces every year and work with the curators to help create an encyclopaedic collection of Western fashion and textile history.

Head to SAMESH.org.au for the latest goings-on in SA. Plus, keep an eye out for SAMESH's refreshed look and feel this Autumn.

FRESH-FACED CAMPAIGNS

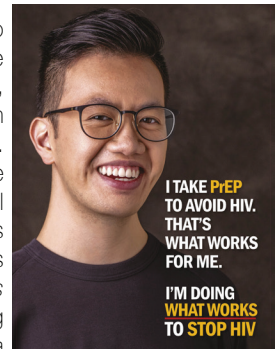
You can expect to see a handful of fresh faces in our health promotion work over the coming months. With men from our trans and Indigenous communities, men living with HIV, and an array of body shapes, ages, and ethnicities - we're seeing more diversity than ever before reflected in our campaigns.



For the first time since it launched, *Drama Downunder* has introduced four new faces alongside the campaign's longstanding model. The four men featured come from our local LGBTI communities, and they'll be joined by another two faces in the coming year when the campaign's original model will officially go into retirement after a decade of being the face of the sexual health campaign.

The newest *Drama Downunder* campaign launched in Victoria earlier this year and will be running in South Australia from 29 April.

Currently there are more tools to prevent HIV than ever before. For the first time in the history of the epidemic, we have powerful biomedical prevention options that could see the end of HIV. The suite of prevention options available currently include: undetectable viral load (UVL); Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP); Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP); and condoms. *What Works* is our newest campaign promoting each of these prevention tools with a particular emphasis on biomedical prevention (UVL, PrEP, PEP). Again, we went out into the community to find a diversity of faces to accompany these HIV prevention messages. You can spot *What Works* on street posters, tram stops and bus shelters from May.



AMYL RECAP

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) postponed its decision on whether or not to change the law around alkyl nitrites (the active ingredient in 'amyl' or 'poppers'). The TGA announced public consultations and our community turned up in a big way to provide feedback on the proposed amendments that could see amyl recategorised as a 'prohibited substance'.

We provided a written submission to the TGA's Advisory Committee on Medicines Scheduling, and the Nitrites Action Group (comprised of community health advocates, researchers, and clinicians) released guidelines around community submissions to the TGA. Thorne Harbour CEO Simon Ruth presented at the Melbourne's public meeting in February alongside Adam Bourne from the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society (ARCSHS). Outcomes from the community consultations have yet to be announced.



WHATS ON!



PUBLIC HOLIDAY HOURS

Many of our sites will be closed from Friday 19 April and will reopen on Monday 29 April, but some of our sites like PRONTO!, Equinox, and the Centre Clinic will be open for limited hours.

For our adjusted hours, head to: thorneharbour.org/contact/



Until 14 APRIL

Bendigo Queer Film Festival

We're proud to support BQFF as they bring another line-up of queer stories to the big screen in Bendigo. For tickets and to check out this year's program, head to: bendigoqueerfilmfestival.com.au



16 APRIL

Thorne Harbour Members Event: 1985

Thanks to Icon Film Distribution, our members are invited to join us for an exclusive screening of the film 1985.

thorneharbour.org/1985

26 APRIL

Lesbian Visibility Day

If it wasn't for a lesbian activist back in 1983, Thorne Harbour might not be here today. April 26th is a chance to highlight and celebrate the contribution and achievements of lesbian women everywhere!



17 MAY

IDAHOBIT

Go rainbow on IDAHOBIT and use the day to publicly stand in support of your LGBTIQ mates, work colleagues, and family members. Spread the love and find out more at:

idahobit.org.au



19 MAY

Int'l AIDS Candlelight Memorial

This year, Living Positive Victoria will be hosting the Candlelight Memorial in The Atrium at Fed Square. This is a time to honour and remember those we've lost and acknowledge that HIV still matters today.

livingpositivevictoria.org.au

23 MAY

Children of Harvey Milk

The Australian launch of Andy Reynolds's *The Children Of Harvey Milk: How LGBTQ Politicians Changed The World* is set to be a big night of global queer political figures including: Peter Tatchell (UK Australian-born activist), Louisa Wall (New Zealand MP), and Sarah McBride (US political figure). Don't miss this!

thorneharbour.org/HarveyMilk

24 MAY

L.O.V.E.

Volunteers are the lifeblood for many of our LGBTI community organisations. Now in its third year, the LGBTI Organisations Volunteer Event - L.O.V.E. is a special night exclusively for volunteers, where we celebrate our volunteers as well as honour those who have contributed countless hours over the years.

thorneharbour.org/news-events/calendar-events/love/



Stay up to date on all the latest across the organisation online at thorneharbour.org or check us out on [facebook.com/thorneharbour/](https://www.facebook.com/thorneharbour/) or follow us on [@ThorneHarbour](https://twitter.com/ThorneHarbour) or [@ThorneHarbour!](https://www.instagram.com/ThorneHarbour)



SAVE THE DATE - 30 MAY

RuPaul Drag Race Trivia

'Guess who's back in the house?' Keep an eye out for the official event announcement, but just like Miss Vanjie - we're hoping to come back for another night of mini challenges, trivia snatched for filth, and with any luck - the Melbourne Surge Pit Crew. It's a massive night out, and all funds raised go to support our work at Thorne Harbour! Don't miss it. Stay up to date, head to: thorneharbour.org/news-events/calendar-events/