

**Thorne Harbour Health Celebrates Diversity in Landmark AGM**

EMBARGOED UNTIL 4PM, Sunday 17 November

*Sunday 17 November 2019* - Thorne Harbour Health's annual general meeting confirmed that the organisation, formerly the Victorian AIDS Council, is one of the most inclusive and diverse LGBTI organisations in the country. As part of the proceedings, the 27th Keith Harbour Address was delivered by the 2019 International Mr Leather, Jack Thompson, the first openly HIV positive trans person to deliver the keynote address. The event also saw the announcement of the Thorne Harbour Health Awards, recognising significant contributions to advancing the health and wellbeing of LGBTI communities and people living with HIV (PLHIV).

Jack Thompson is the first trans person of colour to win the title of International Mr Leather in its 40-year history. Mr Thompson has also been public about being a person living with HIV. His "You Are Enough" speech at IML 2019 challenged the stigma, discrimination, and transphobia he has faced and was widely shared on social media. Prior to winning his title, Mr Thompson has been a sexual health educator and peer test facilitator. He has embraced this broader public platform to advance the community conversation and advocate for the health and wellbeing of trans and gender diverse communities, people of colour, and PLHIV.

"Jack's leadership demonstrates that real progress in addressing stigma can be achieved through bravery, intelligence and inclusion. Jack is a great example to us all," said Thorne Harbour President Chad Hughes.

Mr Hughes' address at the AGM emphasised both the growth of the services that Thorne Harbour now provides and its strength through the diversity of its staff as well as its passionate volunteer base.

Sunday's meeting also saw the recognition of a number of significant contributions from leaders and volunteers whose work contributes to the health and wellbeing of our community.

These included Life Memberships to community personality and volunteer Luke Gallagher as well as community activist and former THH (then VAC) president, Kirsty Machon.

The President's Award went to Joseph Tesoiero for his work in addressing financial barriers to HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for the community.

Journalist David Marr received the Media Award for his work on human rights, homophobic violence and corruption in the church.

Special Service Awards went to:

- Nathan Despott in recognition of his founding of the Brave Network to support LGBTI people of faith
- Renea and Charlotte Johnson for their tireless volunteerism in support of Thorne Harbour
- Greg Axtens for his work advocating on behalf of LGBTI people living with a disability
- Caitlin Grigsby for improving the lives of regional LGBTI people through the Gippsland Pride Initiative

This year's Greig Friday Young Leader Award went to Jason Choi for his commitment to and work with the Peer Education Program at Thorne Harbour.

"It's fantastic to see such a diverse range of individuals being recognized for, not only their significant contribution to the organisation, but their desire to see a better place for LGBTI people in our community," said Thorne Harbour CEO Simon Ruth.

ENDS

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