

## **PROVIDING AGEING GAY MEN WITH RELEVANT AND UP TO DATE SEXUAL HEALTH INFORMATION AND COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS**

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**Background:** The AIDS Action Council (the Council) was providing clinical services to a number of mature aged gay men who had expressed concern about engaging in online environments or negotiating ever evolving sex scenes with limited understanding or social support. These men identified as being social isolated or at risk of social isolation. This meant their access to peer sharing of information was limited. Through conversations with a number of key volunteers, staff and clients the Council underwent a development activity to provide outcomes against social isolation and sexual health and relationships education for this population group. Utilizing existing frameworks for group based health promotion activities as well as resources from other jurisdictions the curriculum for an educational group was developed, this coupled with the goals of reducing social isolation formed the basis of a six week program. At the conclusion of the program which was led by peers the group would be encouraged to maintain connection with each other or individuals in the group through informal social gatherings, supported by the Council in the first instance.

**Analysis:** Gay men are experiencing more social isolation as technology becomes the main source of social engagement or connection for sexual engagements. As technology progresses and particularly in Canberra with limited sex on premises venues of gay identified social spaces ageing gay men need to be supported to engage with new media to stay connected. This is also important in being able to stay up to date and connected with sexual health information.

**Conclusion:** The group experienced significant increases in their understanding of safe sex practices, negotiating relationships, utilizing apps and a reduction in social isolation. The peer led model helped to ensure there was a collegiate learning environment created which also supported their ongoing sustainability as a social network.