



Even Me? Reframing HIV prevention

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Why?

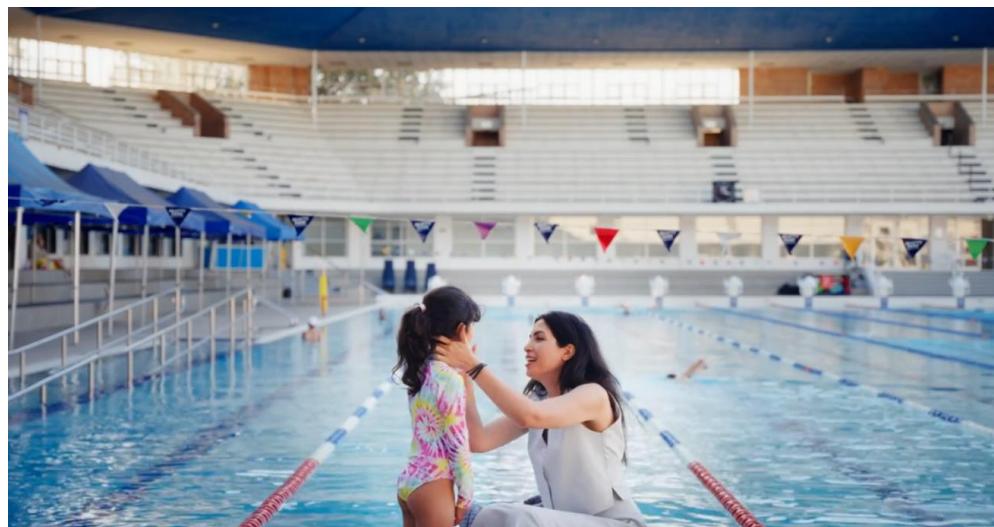
Recent WA data shows...

- Since 2020, the number of HIV cases in people born overseas has continued to rise.
- While men who have sex with men are still the most represented in notifications, there is still a proportion of HIV transmission through heterosexual contact.
- **This does not suggest people born overseas are carriers of HIV. Rather, it highlights health inequities affecting some groups more than others.**

What community told us...

- Some believe HIV and AIDS don't exist in Australia at all.
- Pathways in healthcare are confusing (e.g., GP referral or bulk billing).
- Conversations about sexual health and HIV can be taboo. HIV may be linked to shame, or seen as a result of immoral behaviour like sex or drug use.
- There's also an assumption that if HIV was something to worry about, a doctor would bring it up, so people don't ask about it.
- Mainstream public health messaging is ineffective. There is a need for community-led activities.

The 'Even Me' Concept



Delivery

- **Webpage:** On WAAC website, campaign assets and information.
- **Video assets:** Shared via WAAC social media (n=5).
- **Print assets:** 100 A3 posters were displayed at licensed venues, Edith Cowan University Joondalup Campus, and shopping centers in the Perth metro area. An additional 100 were posted to organisations across the state. Trackable QR code scanned (n=431).
- **Audio assets:** One published by UDUB radio, co-presented with an international student, and one published by Health Equity Matters.
- **Articles:** Published in Medical Forum, AMA's Medicus Magazine, WAAC's HIV Today.
- **Legacy media:** One week of print advertising (n=60,000) and four weeks of online advertising in the Examiner newspaper.
- **Presentations to WA and national workforce (n=5)**
- **Presentation to community:** Belmont Multicultural Women's Friendship Group (n=14).
- **Suite of graphics:** shared for blog posts.
- **Social media:** to be shared to community groups.



PUBLIC HEALTH - WAAC

It's time to rethink HIV

The need for inclusive and culturally safe healthcare

Karina Reeves
Health Promotion Coordinator, WAAC

The landscape of HIV transmission in Australia is shifting. While HIV was historically concentrated among gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men, recent data shows a growing proportion of diagnoses among heterosexual individuals – particularly adults from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Figures from the WA Department of Health indicate that HIV notifications increased from 68 in 2023 to 77 in 2024. Between January and June 2024 alone, 28 new diagnoses were reported, with the majority involving individuals born in South-East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. People from CALD backgrounds continue to be recognised as a priority group under both the Western Australian Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Strategy 2024-2030 and the Ninth National HIV Strategy 2024-2030.

This shift highlights deeper social and structural issues that extend far beyond individual behaviour. Historically, HIV has often been wrongly framed as a consequence of "immoral" behaviour, reinforcing harmful narratives that drive stigma and discrimination. In the context of CALD health, this moralistic framing compounds the real drivers of HIV transmission: structural inequalities, social exclusion, migration-related challenges, limited access to culturally appropriate healthcare, and ongoing stigma.

For many people from CALD backgrounds, navigating a new healthcare system can be overwhelming, especially when services are not culturally safe or accessible.

These barriers heighten HIV risk not because of personal behaviour, but because the systems designed to protect health often fail to reach or support everyone effectively. However, when services adapt to meet the needs of CALD communities, this enables greater engagement and trust, which is essential to reduce sexual health stigma and improve access to HIV prevention, treatment and care.

Did you know that in Australia...

Anyone can access medication to prevent HIV.

Even me!

wac.com.au/learn/hiv/even-me

References available on request.

CPD VERIFIED

Reframing HIV prevention for WA's diverse communities

GUEST COLUMN

Karina Reeves

HIV cases are increasing and health practitioners have a role to play in preventing the spread and encouraging the use of PrEP, writes Karina Reeves, Coordinator of Health Promotion at WAAC.

Recent data from the WA Department of Health show HIV notifications increased from 68 in 2023 to 77 in 2024. Between January and June 2024, 28 new diagnoses were reported, with the majority involving individuals born in South-East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

These mis understandings are sometimes reinforced by healthcare professionals, who may not perceive women in heterosexual relationships as being at risk.

A 2024 scoping review found many providers were unsure about prescribing PrEP to cisgender women, emphasising the need for improved education and awareness.

PrEP is highly effective when taken as prescribed, preventing sexual transmission and reducing the risk of acquiring HIV from a partner who injects drugs.

For women, it offers a way to take control of their sexual health without relying on their partner's choices. Regular testing is also crucial, as delayed diagnoses lead to poorer health outcomes and increase the risk of further transmission.

The role of healthcare providers

Healthcare practitioners play a pivotal role in dispelling myths and initiating HIV-related conversations. In many cultural settings, patients expect providers to raise health concerns, including those related to HIV.

However, research shows clinicians may avoid such discussions for fear of offending patients from migrant backgrounds.

The changing nature of HIV transmission highlights the importance of inclusive, adaptive approaches that address the specific needs of emerging at-risk groups.

Misconceptions of HIV prevention

Stigma remains a major barrier, especially around sexual health and HIV. Misconceptions persist in CALD communities – such as the belief that PrEP is only for men.

When healthcare settings are welcoming and inclusive, individuals are empowered to make informed choices about their sexual health, protecting not only themselves but also their families, partners and communities. ■

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MEDICAL FORUM | WOMEN'S HEALTH

Parents encouraged to say no to car drop offs on Friday

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Canning pioneers recall when it was all bushland

It was a trip down memory lane for some of The City of Canning's older residents on Friday, May 18, for National Walk, Sadie - To School Day.

Now in its 26th year, the national initiative encourages families and carers to ditch the car and walk instead.

The group from Fremantle Anglican Liberties, under drivers, and cleaners, who are walking regularly. Children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day. We should encourage them to do this more often," she said.

She added that some of our Australian children are facing critical levels of inactivity, and families need to take action.

"The best form of physical activity for all ages is walking," said Ms. Woods.

Led by Federation Council of Australia, the campaign calls for a range of walk and other forms of active transport, such as cycling, to make children and young people part of and the importance of reducing traffic congestion around schools.

"Until they are 10, children always hold the hand of an adult when crossing the road," Ms. Woods said.

Addressing these requires promoting free HIV testing - especially for women in high-risk situations or with partners from high-prevalence regions.

The initiative also links physical activity to better learning outcomes.

Walking for even a few minutes a day, can improve a child's focus and academic performance.

Parents, teachers and carers are urged to ditch their car and walk instead this Friday for the National Walk, Safety in School Day.

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Real heroes of the city

Volunteers across the City of Canning are being recognised for the vital role they play in building a stronger, more connected community.

"Our volunteers are the real heroes of the City," said Mayor Patrick Hall. "We owe a debt of gratitude to the thousands of people who give their time to our community programs, and services across the area.

"We are very fortunate to have such a strong network of volunteers who work for our community," explained City of Canning Mayor Patrick Hall. "Volunteering is an opportunity to give back and make a difference in our local and broader areas in Perth."

"From small contributions of time and care can make a difference. Through volunteering, we build connections and help strengthen the social fabric of our community," said Mayor Hall.

More than 100 volunteers currently work alongside City staff, but Mayor Hall said the full circle of local volunteers

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EVEN ME



Home | Learn | HIV | Even Me



HIV

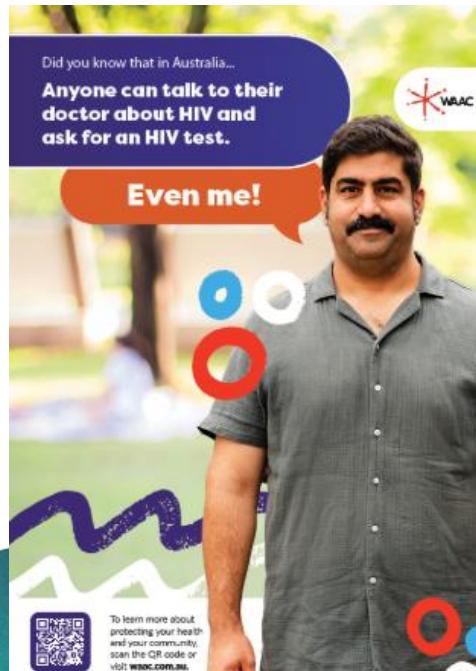
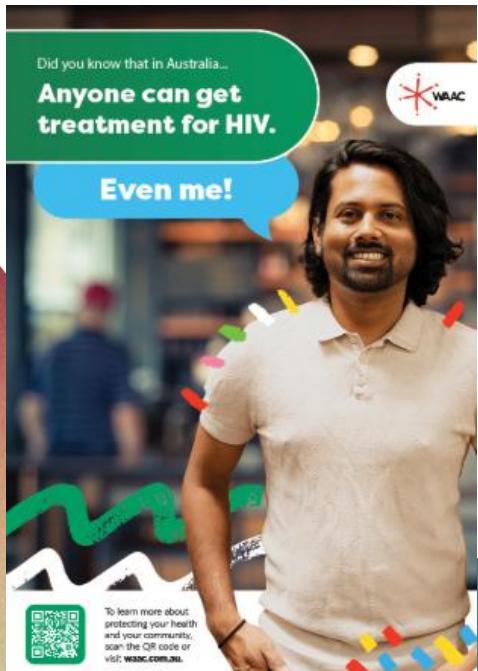
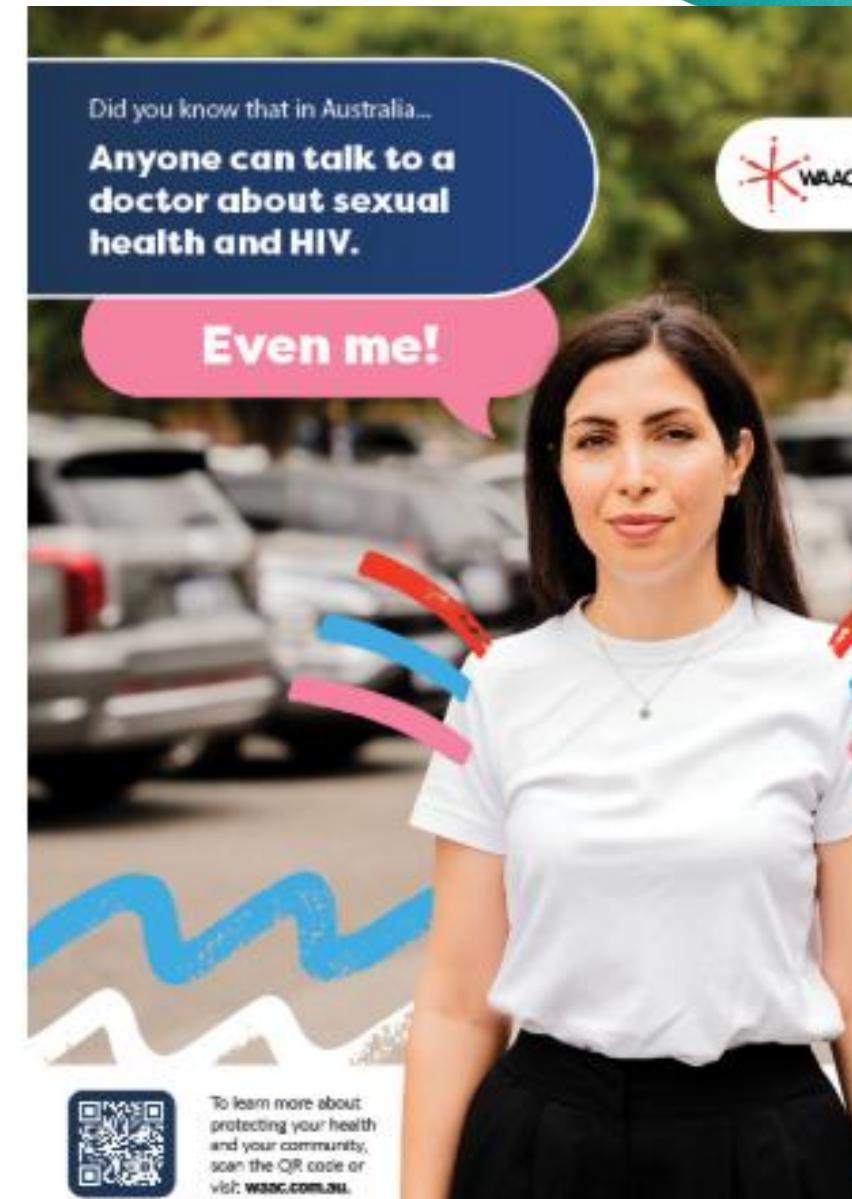
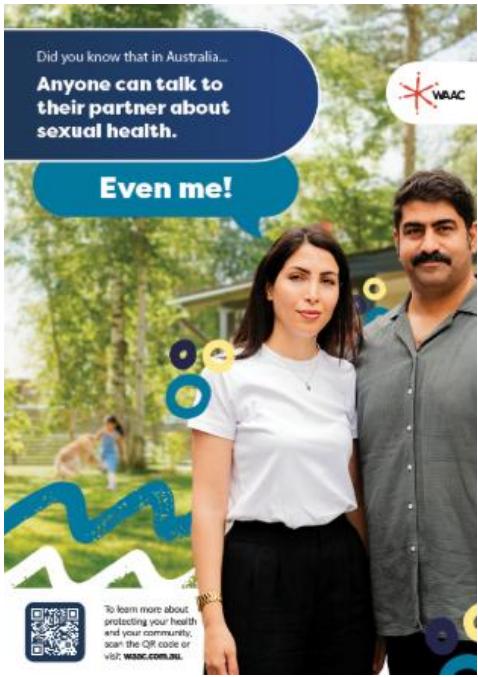
- Even Me
- Stigma And Discrimination
- PrEP
- U = U

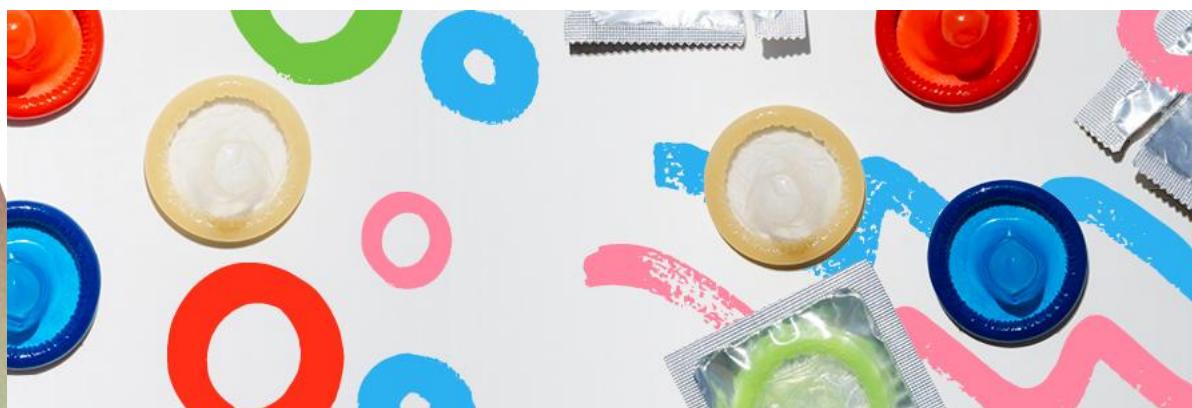
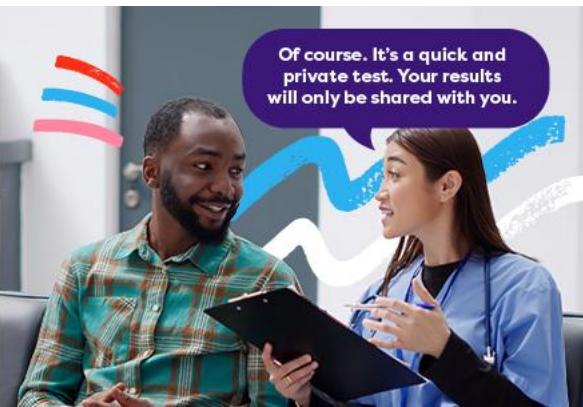
SAFE AND RESPECTFUL SEXUAL HEALTH CARE IN WA

Did you know that in Western Australia, everyone, including people from diverse backgrounds, can access safe, respectful, and confidential sexual health care?

Whether you're visiting a **doctor (also known as a general practitioner or GP)** for a check-up, asking questions about **HIV testing**, or learning about **STI prevention** methods like condoms or **PrEP**, you have the right to be supported without judgement.

Sexual health is part of your health and wellbeing. No matter your age, visa status, language, or whether you're currently sexually active, it's always okay to ask questions and seek information.





Key learnings

- Early evaluation shows strong community resonance and acceptability.
- Engagement observed throughout the process – a sign of meaningful progress.
- This approach challenges the broad use of the term ‘CaLD’ as a homogenising, colonial framework.
- Future phases to focus on specific populations defined by their own cultural identities (e.g. South-East Asian women).
- One single initiative cannot drive lasting change. The project represents progress towards HIV transmission elimination. Sustained, inclusive, community-led strategies are needed.

