

Fiji's Angels: Supporting Peer Leadership of People Who Inject Drugs in a time of National Emergency

Authors:

Ele Morrison¹

¹*Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League, Australia*

Presenter's email: elem@aivl.org.au

Background: Fiji's HIV epidemic is being significantly driven by injecting drug use. 48% of those receiving treatment are likely to have acquired HIV by sharing injecting treatment, with methamphetamine the most injected drug. Knowledge about safer injecting and HIV is very low, stigma about HIV and methamphetamine is high, and no needle syringe programs exist.

Description of Model of Care/Intervention: In October 2025, a group of 15 PWID from Suva were trained and employed to be peer educators (PE) by the Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL) in partnership with the Kirby Institute. The aim was to increase HIV and safer injecting knowledge and prepare PWID for the introduction of NSP. Since then, the PE's have provided the only outreach in Fiji focused on PWID, working across 6 areas of Suva.

Effectiveness/Acceptability/Implementation: The Angels Collective are diverse in age, gender, sexuality and experience. The casual hours are flexible to meet the PE's needs and that of the people they are reaching. They are also unique in being trained and supported by a peer-led drug user organisation.

Conclusion and Next Steps: Their work has resulted in the group reaching an average of 255 people each week, with a total of 5,617 client contacts in the first 22 weeks of service. They have reached teenagers, clients of sex workers, and delivery drivers. In a country where many PWID don't know sharing syringes can transmit HIV, 89% of people reached received safer injecting education and 31% received HIV treatment information.

Implications on communities, practice, policy and/or First Nations communities: The Angels Collective have demonstrated their effectiveness and commitment as the first Fijian peer education outreach project for PWID. However, partnerships with other organisations have been difficult, with the Angels Collective experience stigma and worse. The group aims to become an autonomous drug user organisation. With support from AIVL and others, they could play a crucial role in increasing capacity and reducing discrimination towards their community as NSP is implemented across Fiji.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: Ele Morrison has no conflict of interest to declare.