

Inclusive Community Engagement: Lessons from IAS2023 in Brisbane

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Background:

This abstract highlights lessons from the International AIDS Society's (IAS) conference in Brisbane 2023, focusing on social and behavioural aspects of living with HIV. Queensland Positive People (QPP) hosted and organised impactful events like the Unity Vibes community event and the Positive Lounge, offering valuable insights into effective community engagement.

Description:

The Unity Vibes event created a vibrant space bringing together 300 people living with HIV (PLHIV) and allies from around the world. The event showcased diverse performers, fostering a supportive environment for celebration and connection, highlighting the importance of cultural inclusivity, creative expression, and acknowledging global progress in the fight against HIV.

The Positive Lounge, a dedicated space within the conference venue, was collaboratively designed by QPP, IAS, and PLHIV. The lounge provided a nurturing environment, incorporating an Australian aesthetic, native flora, and showcasing Indigenous Peoples' culture and art. The Lounge served as a hub for discussions on intersectional identities, harm reduction, and community-building.

Lessons Learnt:

Recommendations stemming from QPP's experience emphasised the need for clearer guidelines, proposing Organisational Consultancy contracts for Positive Lounges to ensure comprehensive support. The experience highlighted significant resourcing commitments required, urging careful planning by hosting organisations and consultants.

The Positive Lounge received at least 400 visitors, demonstrating its impact. Evaluation surveys revealed high satisfaction levels, with 93.9% of guests reporting a very satisfying experience. Positive feedback emphasized excellent accessibility and appealing ambiance, reflecting success of the inclusive design.

Conclusion:

This abstract underscores the importance of community engagement, cultural sensitivity, and comprehensive planning in designing spaces like Positive Lounges. It advocates for collaborative efforts to address experiences of PLHIV, reduce stigma, and align with the U=U paradigm. The IAS2023 experience in Brisbane serves as a model for hosting cities, showcasing potential to share local perspectives and contribute meaningfully to the global dialogue on HIV.

Disclosure of Interest Statement (example):

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