

SENIOR HIV POSITIVE SPEAKERS EDUCATING THE AGED CARE SECTOR – ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS AND WHERE TO NOW?

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Background/approach: The Senior Voices Project took a unique, peer-based community engagement approach to educating the aged care workforce, training and supporting LGBTI identifying senior HIV positive speakers in Victoria to deliver talks about living with HIV, ageing, and related health issues.

The project developed HIV and ageing specific resources, new peer support networks, and appropriate models for PLHIV aged care needs. Implementation required a rapid accumulation of knowledge about the aged care sector, the establishment of new networks and novel strategies to educate a high-turnover workforce.

Analysis/argument: Positive Speakers Bureau programs present an appropriate model for educating healthcare workers about living with HIV. However, our experience with the Senior Voices Project demonstrates that adapting a peer-led community engagement approach to the aged care sector poses significant challenges for community organisations seeking to work in this space.

Outcomes/results: Speakers concerns about disclosure, stigma and discrimination resulted in slower project rollout.

The project required ongoing evaluation, adaptation and refinement to meet its aims. One on one peer support and coaching improved speaker retention and a new aged care sector engagement strategy resulted in more speaking engagements. Engaging external contractors' expertise to write the handbook created new momentum.

Although less than expected, the project recruited 24 speakers and delivered 47 presentations to 816 people. Twelve speakers remain engaged with the project. 275 copies of the Positive Caring handbook and 520 copies of the 12 fact sheets were distributed along with website downloads.

Conclusions: The reprioritisation and renegotiation of targets was required to deliver a peer-driven and community development approach to educating the aged care workforce about the health priorities of ageing and living with HIV. A renewed focus on peer support for Senior Voices speakers living and ageing with HIV was key to the success of the project.