

Strategic Plan 2010–2013

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Abbreviations used in this document

AFAO	Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations
ARCSHS	Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society
ASHM	Australasian Society for HIV Medicine
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
GIPA	Greater Involvement of People Living with or Affected by HIV/AIDS
PLHIV	People living with HIV
NAPWA	National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS
NCHECR	National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research
VAC/GMHC	Victorian AIDS Council/Gay Men's Health Centre

From the President

Welcome to the PLWHA Victoria *Strategic Plan 2010–2013*. This document outlines our strategic direction for the next three years and refocuses our organisation on our central mission of advocating for, informing and representing people living with HIV in Victoria.

Over the 22-year history of our organisation, our understanding of HIV has grown and the experience of living with HIV has changed profoundly. But despite the success story of HIV treatments, new challenges are emerging: medical challenges associated with long-term treatment and immune suppression, social challenges for people living with and ageing with HIV over many years, and the organisational challenge of maintaining and sustaining our organisation for the long term.

This document is the foundation on which we will meet those challenges in coming years.

To do this, we acknowledge the critical importance of our partnerships with other organisations in the HIV, health services and disability sectors, and we have framed this plan to enhance those partnerships.

We also acknowledge the centrality of people living with HIV (PLHIV) to our work. Our members, and all PLHIV in Victoria, are the community we serve and we have sought in this plan to represent their needs and to improve the ways in which we speak to and on behalf of PLHIV.

A third focus of this strategic plan is the implementation of a more rational and systematic process for identifying priority areas of work and expanding and evolving our program of activities on an annual basis. We are progressively reforming the governance of PLWHA Victoria to ensure its sustainability into the future – we are determined to be here for our members over the long term.

This strategic plan is intended as a foundation document for the work of the organisation over the three-year period, as we continue to evolve and grow in response to the changing HIV experience and meet the challenge of sustaining our response to HIV over the long term. But it is only a start. The real work begins now.

I want to acknowledge the support and input of the PLWHA Victoria Board who have been actively working towards the development of this document over the last twelve months, and the many others who have guided and inspired us during its development.



Paul Kidd
PLWHA Victoria President
June 2010

Where we are

This is the third triennial Strategic Plan produced by PLWHA Victoria, a community-based organisation which has represented people living with HIV in Victoria since 1988.

Over the 22-year history of our organisation, HIV has evolved dramatically – from being an almost universally terminal illness to a manageable, long-term condition, and from a public health emergency to an ongoing project of sustained prevention and harm minimisation.

But as treatments have improved, the total number of PLHIV in Victoria has increased, and the number living long-term with HIV has also increased. PLHIV still encounter unfair and often illegal discrimination, HIV remains a highly stigmatised condition, and there are significant changes occurring in the community dynamics around HIV prevention.

In 2010, as an organisation and a community, we have identified a number of key challenges and trends which describe the context in which this Strategic Plan has been developed.

These include:

- ▶ HIV stigma, which continues to negatively impact the lives of PLHIV despite more than 25 years of educational efforts;
- ▶ Emerging health challenges associated with long-term HIV infection or treatment – such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and bone disorders – and the challenges of supporting an ageing population of PLHIV;
- ▶ Multiple and overlapping social challenges associated with living with HIV including sexual disclosure and negotiation, relationships, drug and alcohol use, mental health and discrimination;
- ▶ Unacceptably high numbers of PLHIV living in poverty, and a need for services to build financial independence and support people who are returning to work;
- ▶ Pressures on the model of shared responsibility for HIV prevention and the emphasis on treating HIV as a public health rather than a law and order issue;
- ▶ Maintaining and enhancing the engagement of PLHIV with community organisations, and improving the relevance of the services we provide to a shifting demographic;
- ▶ Sustaining our organisation for the long-term challenge of supporting and advocating for PLHIV into the future.

Our organisational response to these challenges has already begun: we are focusing more on supporting wellness among PLHIV, to complement existing services targeted towards people with significant health problems; we have signalled a shift towards framing care and support services in terms of a social inclusion agenda; we have improved our governance processes; and we have established a new strategic planning framework to enable our organisation to remain responsive to the changing needs of PLHIV.

Partnerships

PLWHA Victoria works closely in partnership with a range of HIV-sector and other organisations to deliver a comprehensive and coordinated response to the needs of PLHIV in Victoria and nationally.

In this document we refer to ‘our partners’ in many places and the table below summarises our most significant partner organisations as they stand at the start of this strategic plan. These partnerships change over time, and we will actively seek new collaborations during the life of the plan, so this list is likely to evolve.

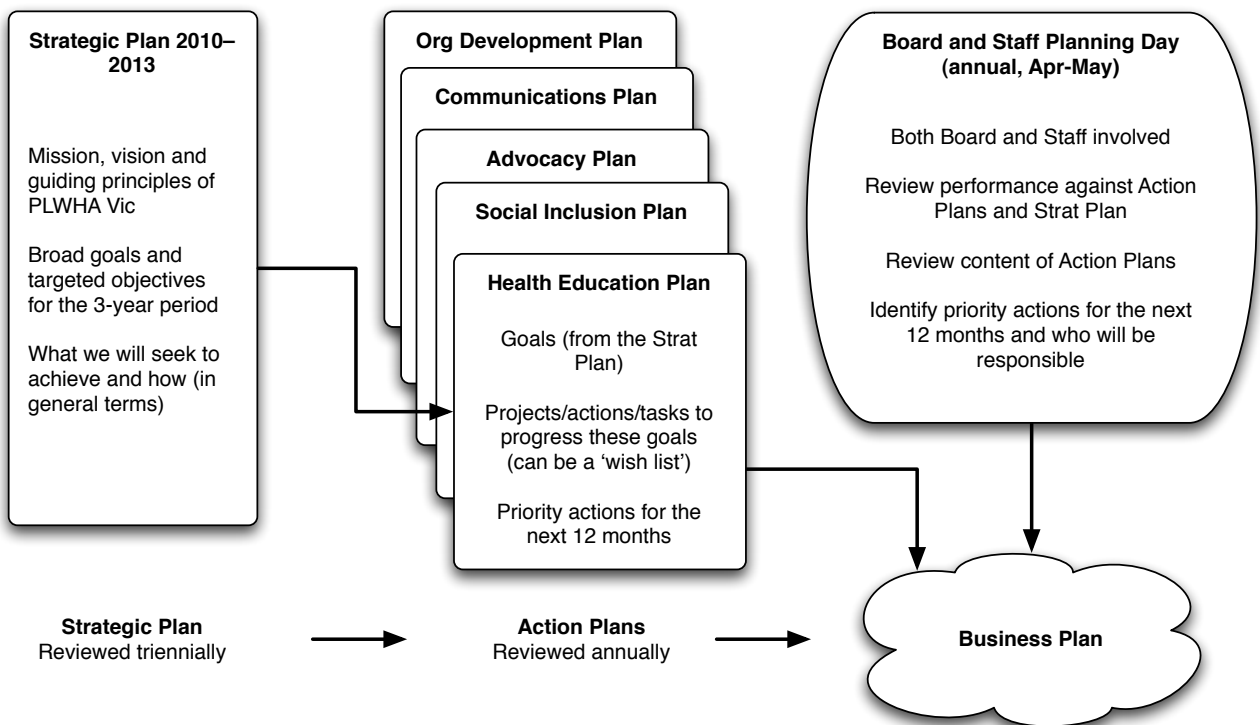
Context	Major partners	Other partners
Victoria – PLHIV agencies	Positive Women Victoria Straight Arrows	AIDS Housing Action Group
Victoria – community sector organisations	VAC/GMHC Country Awareness Network	ALSO Foundation
Victoria – government	Department of Health	Department of Human Services Victoria Police
Health support sector	Multicultural Health and Support Service RDNS	
Clinical services sector	The Alfred Hospital	Melbourne Sexual Health Centre ASHM Royal Melbourne Hospital General Practice Victoria
Research sector	ARCSHS Burnet Institute NCHECR	
Tasmania	Tasmanian Council on AIDS, Hepatitis and Related Diseases	
National	NAPWA	AFAO (through NAPWA)

PLWHA Victoria strategic planning framework

The development of this Strategic Plan is the first step towards the implementation of a new strategic planning process, and this document should be read in that context.

The Board has determined that the work of the agency will be guided by the Strategic Plan and a series of Action Plans – one for each of the strategic goals in this document. The Strategic Plan will be reviewed on a three-yearly basis, and each of the Action Plans will be reviewed annually.

An annual Board and Staff Planning Day, to be held in May each year, will critically examine the Action Plans and assess the organisation’s performance against them. The planning day will propose a new series of priority actions for each of the Action Plans, which when ratified by the Board will form the business plan of the organisation for the coming year.



To support this process, the Strategic Plan will set out the broad strategic direction of the organisation, and enumerate a series of high-level, medium-to-long-term strategic goals for the organisation. The Action Plans will contain specific operational tasks which are shorter term, achievable with current resources and have clearly defined accountabilities and measurable performance criteria.

The action planning process

Each Action Plan will articulate, within a broad scope, potential initiatives to achieve the respective strategic goals covered by that Action Plan. The Board and Staff Planning Day will add and subtract to this list in response to current circumstances, and will identify items from the list as priority actions for the coming year. Taken together, the priority actions from the five Action Plans will form the business plan of PLWHA Victoria.

The intent of this process is to put in place a planning framework which is rational and outcomes-focused while being flexible enough to respond to new challenges, changed environments and emerging opportunities.

Evaluation and continuous quality improvement

An overarching principle of this Strategic Plan is that all PLWHA Victoria activities and processes should be subject to regular and thorough critical evaluation.

As well as the annual evaluation incorporated into the action planning process outlined above, we are committed to rigorous formal evaluation of our activities, to improve the relevance and quality of our work and to identify areas where new or expanded program activities are needed.

Our vision



All people with HIV live in dignity and are able to lead valued and meaningful lives as full participants in society.

Our mission



PLWHA Victoria is a community-based organisation that works to advance the human rights and wellbeing of people living with HIV.

Our mission is to educate, support and advocate on behalf of all people living with HIV in Victoria, as part of a society-wide response that seeks an end to the HIV epidemic.

Our guiding principles

Our organisation is founded on, and guided by, the following core principles:

Human rights

We reject all forms of arbitrary discrimination against people living with HIV, and work towards the elimination of HIV stigma. We are guided and inspired by the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (1948), the **NAPWA Declaration of Rights** (2005) and the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (2006).

Health promotion

We are a health promotion organisation, seeking to advance the health of people living with HIV by creating an enabling environment in which individuals are empowered to realise their aspirations, meet their needs and participate in society. We are guided and inspired by the **Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion** (1986) and the **Jakarta Declaration on Leading Health Promotion into the 21st Century** (1997).

Participation

We assert our right as people living with HIV to be directly involved in the response to HIV in Australia, as declared in the Denver Principles and the GIPA Declaration. We seek to provide leadership to the HIV response informed by the experience of living with HIV. We are guided and inspired by the **Denver Principles** (1983) and the **GIPA Declaration** (1994)

Inclusion

We represent all people living with HIV in Victoria, regardless of gender, sexuality, age, disability, ethnic group or national origin. We work to unite all people living with HIV in our common cause.

Partnership

We work in partnership with other organisations and individuals to advance our common agenda of improving the lives of people living with and affected by HIV.

Excellence

We strive to be a model employer and to employ best practice in all that we do. We value good governance, teamwork, integrity, ethics and innovation.

Strategic goal one:

Health education to promote wellbeing

The World Health Organisation defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

People living with HIV in Australia represent a diverse population, in gender, sexuality, age, disability, language, ethnicity, culture, religion and physical location. They may also be at different clinical stages of HIV, or have other medical or social issues.

PLWHA Victoria has a major role to provide health education which improves the knowledge and life skills of people with HIV to manage their health and maintain wellbeing. Health education provides a prime opportunity to engage with and represent the broader positive population.

Strategic goals – what we will do

We will:

- ▶ **Promote wellness to our members and the broader positive population.**
We will promote a holistic approach that seeks to integrate medical treatment with mental health and social support and which empowers individuals to manage their own health.
- ▶ **Recognise and support the diversity of people living with HIV.**
We will develop information and activities in a range of formats appropriate to the different needs and capacities of our members and the broader positive population.
- ▶ **Promote prevention of HIV transmission.**
We will employ an approach based on harm reduction and informed choice, promoting sexual health, safe sex and safe injecting practices. We will focus on prevention of high risk practices, rather than targeting high risk groups.
- ▶ **Promote the value and expertise of peer support.**
We will utilise our unique understanding of the lived experience of people with HIV, including the crucial stages of diagnosis, disclosure, starting treatment or facing terminal illness, to champion a peer-based approach to health education.

Strategic actions – how we will do this

We will:

- ▶ Continuously develop and expand our capacity as a provider of high-quality health education;
- ▶ Work collaboratively with our partner organisations to ensure that health education activities are delivered appropriately and as part of an coordinated response;

- ▶ Develop and implement a joint health promotion plan with Straight Arrows and Positive Women Victoria;
- ▶ Promote the benefits of HIV testing, diagnosis and treatment;
- ▶ Provide training and professional development for staff and volunteers involved in health education activities;
- ▶ Continue to support and champion the Positive Speakers' Bureau as a peer-based model of health education which draws directly on the lived experience of PLHIV;
- ▶ Identify priority areas for health education activities including wellness, disclosure, ageing and coinfection with Hepatitis C or B, and priority target groups including those newly diagnosed with HIV, bisexual people and HIV-positive people with low English literacy or from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

Evaluation – how we will know we have succeeded

By the end of the strategy, we hope to see:

- ▶ Improved health outcomes among individuals and groups targeted by our health education activities;
- ▶ Increased recognition of PLWHA Victoria as inclusive of all people living with HIV and working in innovative partnerships;
- ▶ Targeted resources and activities produced for specific audiences;
- ▶ High levels of recognition of and support for our health education resources.

Strategic goal two:

Care and support services to build social inclusion

Social exclusion occurs when a range of linked problems which can affect people with HIV impede their participation in society. Problems such as HIV stigma, unemployment, poverty, welfare dependency, poor social skills and social marginalisation may combine with poor physical and mental health to negatively impact the lives of PLHIV.

People living with HIV have the right to participate in society as full and valued members. Providing peer support, social support and skills development to PLHIV will create positive health outcomes for PLHIV in Victoria by increasing social, civil and economic participation.

Strategic goals – what we will do

We will:

- ▶ **Work towards an integrated and responsive set of care and support services for PLHIV.**
We will work with VAC/GMHC and other service providers in the HIV sector to develop an integrated plan for delivery of care and support services over the medium to long term.
- ▶ **Support PLHIV in economic participation, and financial independence.**
We will support PLHIV in developing the skills and resources needed to maintain financial independence, with the goal of reducing the number of PLHIV dependent on welfare or living in poverty.
- ▶ **Support wellness.**
We will develop and deliver program activities to support PLHIV in achieving and maintaining the best possible physical and mental health, with a focus on the broad goal of improving wellness as well as combating illness.
- ▶ **Promote social skills for living with HIV.**
We will develop and deliver program activities to support PLHIV in managing the wide range of barriers to social inclusion including HIV stigma, dealing with diagnosis, relationships, sexual negotiation and disclosure, and preventing HIV transmission.

Strategic actions – how we will do this

We will:

- ▶ Work collaboratively with our partner organisations and service providers within and outside the HIV sector to ensure that care and support services for PLHIV are delivered as part of an integrated and coordinated response;
- ▶ Conduct a review of the specific factors leading to social exclusion for PLHIV in Victoria, and develop tailored responses to these;

- ▶ Extend the reach of our activities to better include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from CALD backgrounds and people living in regional Victoria.

Evaluation – how we will know we have succeeded

By the end of the strategy, we hope to see:

- ▶ An evolution in the range of HIV care and support services delivered in Victoria, with programs designed to meet changing needs and delivered through collaborative partnerships between HIV sector agencies;
- ▶ A decrease in the number of PLHIV living in poverty and a corresponding increase in levels of financial independence and security;
- ▶ An expanded and evolving suite of program activities to support wellness and promote social participation.

Strategic goal three:

Sustained advocacy to combat social disadvantage

As advocates for people living with HIV we seek to challenge social and policy structures that place positive people at disadvantage, through systemic advocacy on behalf of the broader positive population, and direct advocacy on behalf of individual positive people.

Combating discrimination and stigma, breaking down barriers within our communities and building alliances with like-minded advocates are all central to what we do. We seek to contribute constructively to a public policy environment that protects and enhances the rights of PLHIV, to work with corporate and NGO sector service providers to improve interactions with PLHIV, and to build self-advocacy skills among our members.

Strategic goals – what we will do

We will:

- ▶ **Advocate for evidence-based policy.**
We will advocate for, and employ in our own activities, an approach to policy development informed by evidence, critically examining available evidence and supporting the research sector in improving our understanding of issues affecting PLHIV.
- ▶ **Represent PLHIV through advisory structures.**
We will seek to represent people living with and affected by HIV through advisory and decision-making structures within government, service providers and the research sector.
- ▶ **Provide comprehensive information about advocacy issues.**
We will keep our members, and all PLHIV, informed about issues that affect them, the ways PLWHA Victoria is responding to these issues, and the ways that individuals can contribute to the advocacy effort.
- ▶ **Provide direct client advocacy to members in need.**
We will provide advice, guidance and representation to PLHIV directly affected by advocacy issues, and continuously develop our capacity and referral networks to support this;
- ▶ **Combat HIV-related discrimination and stigma.**
We will challenge and work against discrimination and HIV stigma, both in the wider population and within our communities, speaking out for people living with HIV and developing targeted responses to combat misinformation and fear and build social cohesion among people affected by HIV.

Strategic actions – how we will do this

We will:

- ▶ Ensure that our advocacy approaches are based on an understanding of the context of disadvantage affecting PLHIV, and whether it is a result of HIV infection or other social, cultural or economic factors;
- ▶ Seek representation on relevant government and other advisory structures, and provide high-level input to government policy processes including state and national HIV strategies, integrated HIV service delivery plans and other processes affecting PLHIV;
- ▶ Work in collaboration with NAPWA, VAC and other key partner organisations to contribute to policy development and advocacy efforts on a national and state level, including the development and implementation of state and national HIV strategies;
- ▶ Develop high-level policy analysis capabilities within the PLWHA Victoria office;
- ▶ Keep our members informed about advocacy issues, both through existing channels and through the development of new resources;
- ▶ Promote awareness of the rights of PLHIV, among affected communities, the wider population and within the health services sector;
- ▶ Continue to support and promote the Connect Line as a key support and advocacy tool;
- ▶ Build links with organisations advocating on behalf of people with disabilities;
- ▶ Continue to prioritise the development of strategic partnerships and referral networks, including among mainstream health and support services, and build alliances and skills-sharing exchanges with other advocacy-based organisations.

Evaluation – how we will know we have succeeded

By the end of the strategy, we hope to see:

- ▶ An evolving, evidence-based policy framework which actively integrates the views of people living with HIV and supports human rights and self-determination for PLHIV;
- ▶ Established representation, through PLWHA Victoria and/or our partner organisations, of PLHIV on all relevant advisory structures within government, service providers and the research sector;
- ▶ Improved awareness, and understanding, of PLWHA Victoria's advocacy work, among members and other PLHIV;
- ▶ Improvements in the policy environment, education of service providers, and self-advocacy skills among PLHIV.

Strategic goal four:

Effective communications to engage and inform

Effective communication is central to every aspect of our work, and represents a fundamental core capacity for achieving our organisational mission.

This strategy recognises the centrality of communication as a tool to facilitate interaction between the organisation, its members, partner organisations, service providers and the community; to build awareness of and support for the organisation's activities; and to support our efforts to combat stigma and build awareness of HIV.

Strategic goals – what we will do

We will:

- ▶ **Develop targeted, culturally appropriate communications strategies.**
We will strive to ensure that communications materials produced by PLWHA Victoria are targeted to specific audiences, are culturally and linguistically appropriate, and suit the capacities of different groups of stakeholders.
- ▶ **Strengthen dialogue with our membership, and the broader positive population.**
We will actively engage with and listen to our members and the communities of PLHIV we seek to represent, and inform our decision-making processes in response.
- ▶ **Promote the work of our organisation.**
We will market our organisation and the work we do, to draw public attention to the range and value of our work, build support, attract funding and encourage membership.
- ▶ **Engage the media.**
We will engage proactively with journalists and the news media, to increase understanding of the complexities of living with HIV and improve the quality of reporting about HIV in Victoria.

Strategic actions – how we will do this

We will:

- ▶ Frame the Communications Action Plan around the particular communications needs of different audiences and communities to enable targeted, audience-focused communications;
- ▶ Make appropriate use of both new and old communications technologies to inform and be informed by our members, stakeholders and communities;

- ▶ Improve the transparency of our processes and the accountability of our organisation to its members;
- ▶ Provide mechanisms for PLHIV to directly guide and inform our work through focus groups, committees and other consultative processes;
- ▶ Develop and maintain a strong and consistent branding strategy to improve recognition of our organisation and the work we do;
- ▶ Develop and maintain a proactive media strategy to build stronger relationships between PLWHA Victoria and the news media.

Evaluation – how we will know we have succeeded

By the end of the strategy, we hope to see:

- ▶ Improved awareness of, and support for, PLWHA Victoria and its work – within our stakeholder groups and the general public;
- ▶ Consistent branding of materials produced by PLWHA Victoria, and a high level of recognition of that brand within our stakeholder groups;
- ▶ Targeted communications materials produced for specific audiences, ensuring that all stakeholder groups are provided with appropriate and relevant information;
- ▶ Improved media reporting of issues around HIV, and an acknowledged role for PLWHA Victoria as an authentic voice of PLHIV in Victoria;
- ▶ Increased membership of the organisation, and a stronger understanding among PLHIV of the benefits of membership.

Strategic goal five:

Organisational development and governance to deliver quality work

PLWHA Victoria strives for the highest standards of professionalism, accountability and excellence in its management and governance.

Improving our structures and processes will enable the organisation to purposefully deal with future growth, identify change opportunities and act effectively in response to the changing issues affecting the lives of people living with HIV.

Strategic goals – what we will do

We will:

- ▶ **Ensure good governance of the organisation.**
We will strive to be a model organisation, building the capacity of the Board and continuously reviewing its performance to ensure that PLWHA Victoria is governed to the highest possible standard.
- ▶ **Support capacity development for people living with HIV.**
We will encourage PLHIV to engage with our organisation as employees, volunteers and Board members, and support their professional and personal development;
- ▶ **Ensure the financial sustainability of PLWHA Victoria.**
We will engage with funders to ensure the organisation has the capacity and resources needed for effective governance, staff development and delivery of activities.
- ▶ **Develop our skills.**
We will strengthen and maintain our skills and expertise base for effective representation.
- ▶ **Reflect on our performance.**
We will critically analyse our policy, programs, resources, and strategic planning on a regular and structured basis.

Strategic actions – how we will do this

We will:

- ▶ Build formal strategic partnerships and working relationships with community, government, health sector, research and educational organisations, to enhance the organisation's network activity and provide opportunities for skills development and skill sharing for Board, staff and volunteers;

- ▶ Develop a model governance framework for the organisation, to support the professional development of Board members, succession planning and critical evaluation of the Board's performance;
- ▶ Continuously improve the management of organisational finances and plan for the long-term financial sustainability of our organisation;
- ▶ Develop best practices that are informed by evidence, transparent and accountable;
- ▶ Engage in continuous quality improvement in regard to our organisational processes and our activities.

Evaluation – how we will know we have succeeded

By the end of the strategy, we hope to see:

- ▶ Enhanced capacity and skills in PLWHA Victoria staff, Board and volunteers;
- ▶ An active and passionately engaged Board providing excellent governance and strategic development to the organisation, and critically evaluating its performance;
- ▶ Extensive, thorough and routine evaluation of PLWHA Victoria activities and programs, and transparency in making the outcomes of evaluation processes available to our members;
- ▶ The development of new programs and services for PLHIV through an evidence-based process, drawing on research, enquiry and evaluation of existing programs.