

## **“POSITIVE WALKERS” – celebrating 4 years and an estimated 670 km; understanding its success**

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### **Background/Purpose:**

‘Positive Walkers’, established in 2018, represents a health promotion collaboration between two primary care and support services for people living with HIV (PLHIV) - the Albion Centre and HIV Outreach Team. This was in response to feedback from clients indicating the need for a walking group to encourage healthier lifestyles, and address social isolation and community engagement. It is privately registered with Heart Foundation Walking (HFW); an experienced, nationwide, community-based walking program established in 2007. HFW provides the framework and education for Walk Organisers (WO) to competently run a walking group.

### **Approach:**

‘Positive Walkers’ has now operated for 4 years. The role of WOs is fully undertaken by consumers with clinicians assisting when required.

In 2018 we reported key learnings from the walkers from the first 6 months of this initiative. This paper focuses on the WOs and clinicians to investigate the challenges and barriers encountered and the factors influencing the success of this peer led public health initiative, particularly the program’s sustainability.

### **Outcomes/Impact:**

Nine interviews were conducted using qualitative methods (semi structured one-on-one interviews and theme analysis). The main outcomes included the significance of the walk for psychosocial benefits, and the sense of achievement realised from running walks. Involving health professionals was seen as beneficial.

### **Innovation and Significance:**

Published research on HFW found the 3 year program retention rate to be 36%. ‘Positive Walkers’ represents a 100% retention rate. We know from our previous research that ‘Positive Walkers’ has provided psychosocial benefits, and contributed to improved wellbeing. The findings from this study are of significance in providing practical insights for replicating this initiative, and for ensuring its longevity. It is crucial to ensure the sustainability of this program, which aligns with the NSW HIV Strategy 2021-2025: linking and retaining people in care.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement: None.**