

## **“POSITIVE WALKERS” – STEPS AHEAD...**

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### **Background/Purpose:**

Feedback from clients of the HIV Outreach Team and Albion Centre indicated a need for a walking group to encourage healthier lifestyle and address social isolation.

People living with HIV (PLHIV) have an increased risk of health complications often associated with aging, such as cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance and decreased bone density. There is strong evidence of the benefits of physical activity for PLHIV in optimising health outcomes including improving cardiorespiratory fitness, body composition and quality of life.

### **Approach:**

Heart Foundation Walking (HFW) is a nationwide, free, community-based walking program established in 2007 by the National Heart Foundation (HF). “Positive Walkers” is based on this program.

Consumer volunteers have taken on the role of Walk Organisers (WO) and run the group through HFW. Dietitians at both services are available if needed, however clients have ownership of the group and the day to day running.

### **Outcomes/Impact:**

“Positive Walkers” is now running weekly and has minimal involvement from staff. Three consumer WO have registered and this number is expected to increase with further recruitment. Promotion of the group to a larger number of clients to build numbers is now planned.

Outcome measures will include quality of life using PozQoL, and qualitative data from focus groups, and client satisfaction surveys.

### **Innovation and Significance:**

The collaboration across the two health services and their consumers has allowed this group to reach a wide number of PLHIV. Walking is a free, easy and accessible way to increase physical activity and ‘Positive Walkers’ provides a much needed HIV friendly environment that supports social engagement, while promoting a healthy lifestyle. Apart from psychosocial benefits and improved wellbeing, this group aligns with SESLHD’s Journey to Excellence 2018-2020 Strategy addressing community wellbeing and health equity and the NSW HIV strategy 2016-2020: Engaging and retaining people in care.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

No interests to disclose.