

Reaching Beyond 95+ and connecting the dots: A co-designed housing support model strengthens health outcomes and improves quality of life for people living with HIV.

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Background/Purpose:

A lack of safe, secure housing for people living with HIV (PLHIV) creates barriers to retention in care, access and adherence to antiretroviral medications, sustained viral suppression and the elimination of HIV transmission.

NSW (NSW) has the largest jurisdiction of PLHIV in Australia, with 50% aged 50 years and older, and the government has set targets for the virtual elimination of HIV transmission by 2025. 2016 Census data recorded 37,715 people in NSW classified as homeless, a 37% increase from 2011: 14% higher than the national increase. There was a 43% increase between 2011-2016 in people aged over 55 years experiencing homelessness.

Approach:

In 2016 Positive Life NSW (PLNSW), co-designed a housing support model offering advocacy to all PLHIV across NSW to access, achieve and maintain stable accommodation, including those at risk of homelessness. The program receives referrals from across the allied health, housing and HIV sector, including self-referrals.

Now in its sixth year, the Program has a total of 696 clients: 618 men, 55 women and 18 transgender individuals – a 41% increase in new enrolments when comparing Year 1 with Year 5.

Outcomes/Impact:

The importance of safe and secure housing has increased dramatically as supply of public housing stock lags behind demand. Storing medication, maintaining adherence, sustaining healthy routines and safety from stigma and discrimination are a direct function of stable housing. PLNSW's model offers opportunities for scaling up housing support interventions across jurisdictions to expand the evidence-base and build and sustain capacity for implementation research.

Innovation and Significance:

There continues to be a critical need for dedicated services for PLHIV at risk of or experiencing homelessness. PLHIV supported into stable housing benefit from positive health outcomes including increased prevention strategies, greater treatment

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adherence, retention in care, support and an improved quality of life contributing to the achievement of NSW Health HIV Strategy targets.

Disclosure of Interest Statement (example):

Nothing to declare.