

# **It's Time to Think Positive About HIV - lessons learnt by innovating public health messaging to address HIV stigma**

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## **Background/Purpose:**

Australian HIV strategies call on addressing HIV stigma as a key component of the HIV response, alongside activities in prevention, testing and treatment, yet clear interventions to address stigma are often complex to design. ACON's innovative anti-stigma campaign, *It's Time to Think Positive About HIV*, overcomes these challenges to provide a clear public health intervention to address HIV stigma. Through a unique approach that hardly mentions HIV stigma, *Think Positive* instead celebrates HIV allyship and calls on all of community, regardless of HIV status, to confront HIV stigma together. Through Australian stories, *Think Positive* provides a practical blueprint for people to adapt and challenge stigma in their own lives.

## **Approach:**

A core four-minute campaign video captured six real Australian stories that celebrated HIV allyship in the spaces of sexuality, relationships, healthcare settings, friendships, and in HIV disclosure. Aligned with best practice principles of the greater and meaningful involvement of people living with HIV (PLHIV) within the HIV response, staff living with HIV led the conceptualisation, development, and delivery of the campaign. *Think Positive* launched on 1 September 2021 and ended promotions on 31 October 2021.

## **Outcomes/Impact:**

Embedded on ACON's Ending HIV campaign platform, the *Think Positive* landing page with HIV stigma content and campaign video achieved 12,640 page views. *Think Positive* video content further achieved 395,533 views across Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Internal evaluation shows that 97% of people who saw the main campaign video considered messaging to be extremely, very, or moderately effective.

## **Innovation and Significance:**

*Think Positive* demonstrates that anti-stigma messaging can be constructed as empowering and optimistic. Anti-stigma messaging does not need to shame behaviours nor showcase harms, but rather, may celebrate best practice allyship and collective community care. This new approach relieves the burden on PLHIV to manage HIV stigma solely through personal resilience through an all of community approach.

## **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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