

# EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV USING AUSTRALIAN AGED CARE SERVICES

## Authors:

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## Background:

While the health and wellbeing of younger people living with HIV (PLHIV) has markedly improved, concerns about increasing numbers of ageing PLHIV are growing. We conducted a national literature review and survey to provide recommendations to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety for how aged care can better meet diverse and evolving needs of Australian PLHIV.

## Methods:

In 2019, we assessed evidence from peer-reviewed Australian literature, and developed a national anonymous electronic survey targeted at PLHIV, their carers/family, and specialist HIV and aged care service providers. 522 people participated, including 420 PLHIV. Participants were asked open-ended and closed questions, including: demographics; chronic physical/mental health conditions; functional limitations; aged care service and eligibility gaps; abuse/discrimination in aged care; service provision to PLHIV with neurological or psychiatric conditions and complex care; and navigation requirements.

## Results:

Despite the prevalence of multiple chronic health conditions (70.77%), physical functional impairments (42.5%), and living alone (40%), only 23% of PLHIV surveyed aged 65+ use aged care services. There were complaints about substandard care (structural and staffing-related), and reports of discrimination against PLHIV. 95% of PLHIV wanted to remain living at home until it became impossible to manage. Of those PLHIV surveyed 67.2% preferred to receive services from LGBTQIA+ people, other PLHIV (58.4%), non-religious for-profit (18.3%), and/or religious/mainstream provider (15.7%). Some indicated they would suicide rather than be cared for by religious/faith-based organisations, citing fears of stigma/discrimination.

## Conclusion:

The provision of non-discriminatory aged care to PLHIV will present challenges for aged care services employing staff who may hold prejudices about homosexuality, drug use, sex work, gender dysphoria, and HIV. Peer-led HIV education to aged care services is needed to ensure services are provided respectfully and non-discriminatorily. Community not-for-profit organisations also have a role to play in provision of aged care services to PLHIV.

## Disclosure of Interest Statement:

Nothing to declare.