

DO GAY MEN IN NSW BELIEVE WE CAN END HIV: AN ANALYSIS OF GAY MEN'S ATTITUDES BASED ON FIVE YEARS OF EVALUATION OF ENDING HIV

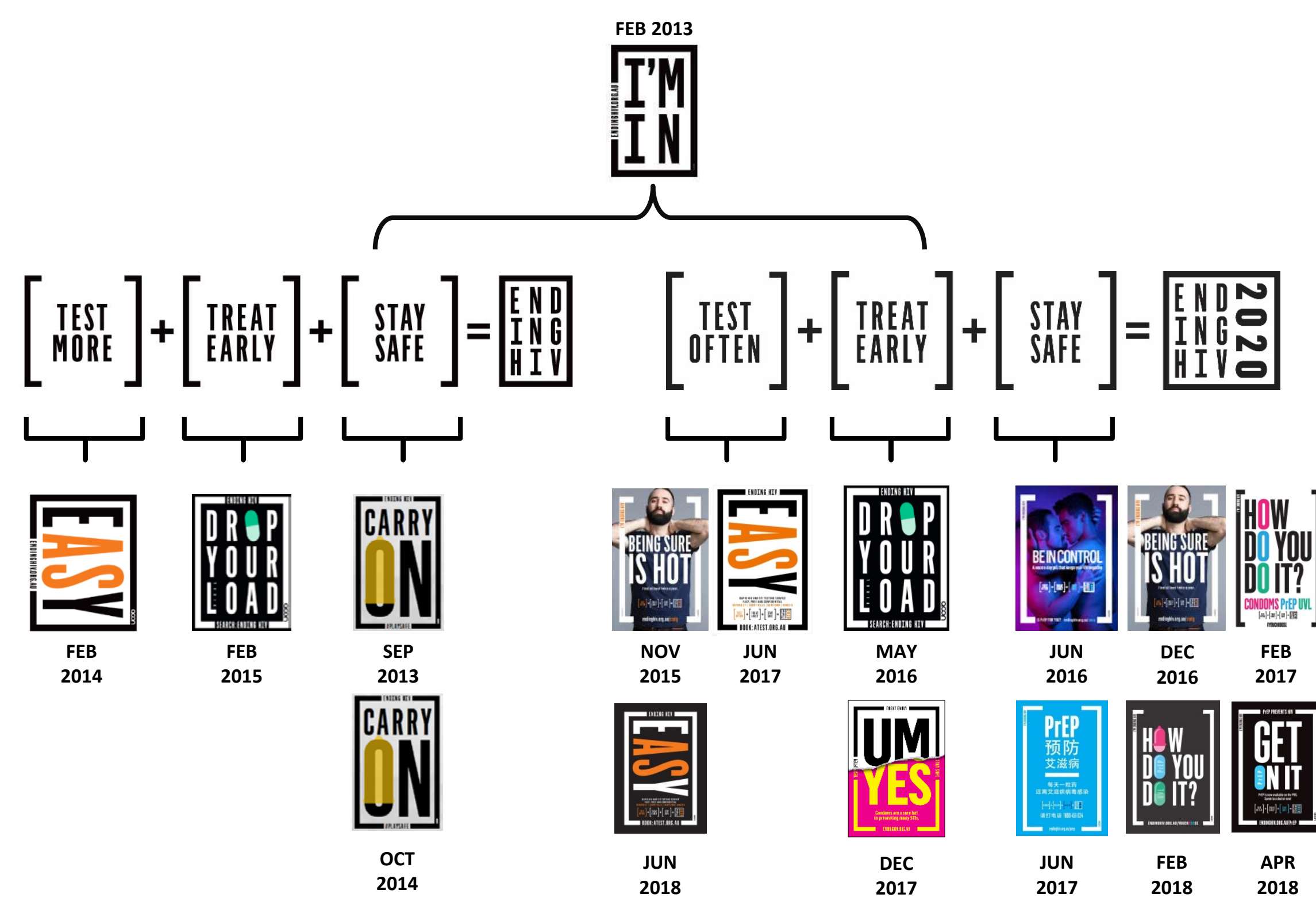
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BACKGROUND

Ending HIV (EH) is the first large scale campaign embodying the NSW HIV Strategy, leveraging the treatment as prevention approach (TasP) in order to mobilise gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men to end HIV transmission by 2020.

As it was thought this information would be new to much of the audience, a series of attitude and belief statements were developed and a baseline was collected prior to the launch, in early 2013. Assessing both current HIV knowledge and the extent to which the audience believed everything had changed and that we can now actually end HIV in NSW.

Since then, nine consecutive phases have been implemented and independently evaluated online. This poster analyses ten campaign evaluation reports over five years.



APPROACH:

Over a five-year period, an independent consultant has evaluated ten phases of the EH campaign, including one baseline survey prior to the campaign launch. As part of the surveys, gay, bisexual and other MSM were asked their feelings towards seven statements with response options ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree".

The seven statements are:

- 1. EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED, WE CAN NOW DRAMATICALLY REDUCE HIV TRANSMISSION**
- 2. NOW MORE THAN EVER, GAY MEN NEED TO KNOW THEIR HIV STATUS**
- 3. SEXUALLY ACTIVE GAY MEN SHOULD TAKE AN HIV TEST AT LEAST TWICE A YEAR**
- 4. HIV TREATMENTS NOW OFFER INCREASED HEALTH BENEFITS AND FEWER SIDE EFFECTS**
- 5. HIV TREATMENTS SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE THE RISK OF PASSING ON HIV**
- 6. EARLY HIV TREATMENT IS BETTER FOR YOUR HEALTH AND CAN HELP PROTECT YOUR SEX PARTNERS**
- 7. CONDOMS CONTINUE TO BE AN EFFECTIVE WAY OF PREVENTING HIV TRANSMISSION***

* In March 2016 this statement was changed to reflect advances in bio-medical prevention. On prior surveys the statement was 'condoms continue to be the most effective way of preventing HIV transmission'.

Each evaluation recruited more than 500 gay, bisexual and other along with other MSM living in NSW, totaling more than 5,000 respondents for the analysis. Sample sizes were similar across the ten surveys in terms of age groups, HIV status and area of residence.

We're a NSW based community organisation specialising in HIV prevention, HIV support and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) health. Established in 1985 as the AIDS Council of NSW, we're here to end HIV transmission among gay and homosexually active men, and promote the lifelong health of LGBTI people and people with HIV. Our head office is in Sydney, we have offices in several regional locations and we provide services throughout NSW. We acknowledge the support of our primary funder, the NSW Ministry of Health.

IMPACT:

We saw a positive shift towards more, gay, bisexual and other MSM being in agreement with the statements after the March 2018 survey in comparison to February 2013.

All but one of the statements saw increases over time, with some making dramatic improvements.

There was a significant increase in respondents indicating they agree or strongly agree with the statement: 'Everything has changed, we can now dramatically reduce HIV transmission.' This increased from 48% prior to launch of EH in February 2013 to 87% in March 2018. This increase of 39% supports the notion that today, a majority of gay and bisexual men believe that ending HIV transmission is possible.

Attitudes towards HIV treatment suggest a greater awareness and understanding of the concepts of treatment as prevention (TasP) or undetectable viral load (UVL) as being beneficial to the health of the HIV positive partner as well as its impact on reducing onward transmission.

Those who responded either agreeing or strongly agreeing to the statements 'HIV treatments significantly reduce the risk of passing on HIV' and 'Early HIV treatment is better for your health and can help protect your sex partners' increased by 51% and 21% from February 2013 to March 2018, respectively.

Knowledge increased significantly among HIV negative gay and bisexual men, the analyses shows 18% increase in their belief in TasP as an effective prevention strategy.

Based on the evaluation data, a gradual increase in gay bisexual men's knowledge has developed over time, and is not linked to any single event (announcement of research findings or policy change), but a cumulative total over the five year period.

Answer Options	Percentage of respondents who strongly agree or agree with the statements below.									
	FEB 2013	MAY 2013	NOV 2013	APRIL 2014	DEC 2014	APR 2015	MAR 2016	SEPT 2016	APR 2017	MAR 2018
Everything has changed, we can now dramatically reduce HIV transmission	48%	59%	59%	67%	61%	71%	77%	86%	77%	87%
Now more than ever, gay men need to know their HIV status	81%	85%	86%	90%	89%	91%	92%	92%	91%	92%
Sexually active gay men should take an HIV test at least twice a year	88%	87%	92%	93%	89%	92%	93%	96%	94%	95%
HIV treatments now offer increased health benefits and fewer side effects	65%	66%	67%	73%	69%	75%	77%	78%	71%	77%
HIV treatments significantly reduce the risk of passing on HIV	33%	42%	50%	64%	59%	69%	73%	83%	78%	84%
Early HIV treatment is better for your health and can help protect your sex partners	74%	80%	89%	91%	92%	93%	93%	95%	93%	95%
Condoms continue to be an effective way of preventing HIV transmission*	95%	92%	92%	91%	91%	88%	94%	94%	94%	94%

* In March 2016 this statement was changed to reflect advances in bio-medical prevention. On all prior surveys the statement was 'condoms continue to be the most effective way of preventing HIV transmission'.

INNOVATION AND SIGNIFICANCE:

In order to achieve an end in HIV transmissions, we need to engage gay, bisexual and other MSM through innovative and engaging messaging and instill a belief and build a movement towards a common goal - ending new HIV transmissions in NSW.

This movement needs to continue to engage and increase the health literacy of gay, bisexual and other MSM about new HIV prevention strategies including biomedical technology if we are to achieve our goal of ending new HIV transmissions in NSW.

The analysis of this five year evaluation demonstrates that gay and bisexual men not only believe that it is possible, but they agree it is achievable.

