



ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016

Positive Life South Australia

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UPDATE TO OUR MEMBERS & SUPPORTERS

Summary

Positive Life South Australia (PLSA) throughout the 2015-16 financial reporting period faced a difficult year with complex challenges. Robust debate and hard decisions had to be made about PLSA's future existence and direction. The impact of no government for the for the second year running had a devastating effect for PLSA and our positive community.

First incorporated back on 26 April 1995, the positive community over time came to know and trust the organisation's high quality, evidence-based services and programs. Since 1997 PLSA were located within the grounds of the Glandore Community Centre where we undertook the delivery of direct client services at the Positive Living Centre (PLC) which met an important need through informal opportunities for peer support and friendship networks. Over time, this continued to strengthen social connectivity, a positive sense of belonging, self-determination and empowerment and we became the independent advocacy voice for people living with HIV in South Australia.

Financial Highlights

Numerous grant applications were submitted but in a shrinking funding landscape and the uncertainty of the federal election organisations were reluctant to part with their money. PLSA continued to operate but reduced opening for only three days a week with one paid staff member and an incredible team of committed and dedicated community volunteers. We continued to successfully provided albeit on a smaller scale, quality and support and assistance to our 400 members.

We witnessed first-hand an increase in mental health issues and positive peoples lived experiences and challenges as they continued to struggle in meeting the rising cost of living. Rent, food, medical costs and the rising costs of essential utilities all impacted heavily on stress levels and overall quality of life.

Despite reduced programs and services new members continued to join the organisation. People still volunteered to help in the HIVE and with Friday lunches and as new Board members. There was a high demand and need for the HIVE to provide groceries and fresh

fruit and vegetables for positive people who were on a limited income. The Small Loans Scheme provided an immediate \$20 cash loan for people which was repaid by an agreed date and the \$5 Friday lunches were well attended and run by a dynamic team of volunteers. A heartfelt thank you to all in the community who assisted here in so many ways.

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On World AIDS Day, 1 December monies were again collected to support the Red Ribbon Fund. This fund-raising money as well as sponsorship from MAC cosmetics, helped cover essential ambulance subscription for positive people on a low income, and also the purchase of groceries and fresh produce for the HIVE. This assisted those experiencing financial hardship and struggling to pay for medication and nutritious food.

In 2016 when a substantial external funding grant was unsuccessful the future of PLSA looked very grim. Sadly, with rising costs and no new income the doors of the PLC closed on 26 August 2016. With the departure from the PLC location, we could no longer provide service delivery “by positive people for positive people”. With no future incoming funding for 2016-17, the organisation’s options were very limited. Fortunately, a previous motion to close the organisation was rescinded and at a special SGM where the positive community voted to continue as an advocacy incorporated organisation.

Operating Highlights

The Women's Drop in Zone and peer support meetings continued to be held on the first Wednesday of each month. This well attended group consisted of women newly diagnosed connecting with women who had lived with HIV for many years. The women consistently spoke about having a safe space among their peers to talk freely about their lives and their HIV journey.

The PLSA Positive Speakers Bureau was still operational with bookings from existing partners such as SHINE, Flinders University, Pharmacy students, Clean Needle Program

staff, and a few new schools. Under the MAC partnership both PLSA PSB speakers and PLSA Board members educated both staff and customers at the Marion Westfield Store during AIDS Awareness Week in 2015.

During the 2015-16 reporting period other significant events driven by the positive community included the Candlelight Memorial in September 2015. This event was always a powerful and emotive experience that evolves each year. Viewing of the quilt panels surrounded by our memorial tree and plaque in the beautiful grounds of Glandore will always hold a special connection for the positive community.

Through Femfatales, which is the NAPWHA National Network of Women Living with HIV, the introduction of an inaugural annual event on 9 March 2016 was introduced. A National Day to Inspire, Celebrate and Advocate for all Women Living with HIV in Australia was organised and held across most States and Territories. At PLSA this event was a highly successful day and increased the visibility of women with HIV in the community. PLSA promoted a morning event for positive women only and an open lunch event was later organised at SAMESH for the wider community. The aim was to highlight the existence of Women Living with HIV in Australia in 2016 who are often invisible, highly stigmatised and a minority often under diagnosed or late to test.

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Looking Ahead

In the upcoming months, the way forward for PLSA will become evident and ensure that the unique voices and knowledge of the body positive in SA does remain strong, engaged and “Positive, Powerful and Proactive.”

At PLSA new members continue to connect and offers by volunteers are appreciated and welcomed. There are supportive community members who believe we still have a future

leadership and advocacy role to play and consider that ensuring the voices of people living with HIV in SA are represented.

As we look into our future vision and needs, we approached another community based organisation SIN, the Sex Industry Network. Totally understanding our situation, the Management at SIN and their national organisation Scarlett Alliance agreed to support PLSA explore a new future. They have provided a shared location one day a week at Mile End which is their new premises and PLSA value this opportunity.

PLSA can remain proud of its long history, its successes and the diversity of people living with HIV that we have connected with throughout South Australia over the many years.

Obviously PLSA are currently not in a position to continue the prior provision of direct client activities and support services of the past. However, we openly invite all our members to join us in a new future and plan to hold a needs assessment and consultation meeting in the new year.

We all know that positive people understand resilience and while PLSA no longer has its own community 'drop in centre', we still have community members, leaders and supporters whose steadfast commitment to the organisation will eventually see PLSA emerge again as a dynamic and authentic community organisation. With 30 years of history and knowledge, we are well prepared to advocate and represent the diverse needs and interests of PLHIV in SA well into the 2020s.

Katherine Leane
PLSA President

“As a peer-based organisation by people living with HIV, for people living with HIV, we still have a role as the independent advocacy voice for people living with HIV in South Australia.”