

25 Years History

1984 - 2009



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Introduction

There are very few Queenslanders who could have predicted the impact that the Queensland AIDS Committee would have on the state when it formed in 1984. As former President Alan Hough has said, the organisation which evolved into the Queensland Association for Healthy Communities (QAHC) “has touched literally thousands of lives.”¹ The history of QAHC is a vital part of our modern LGBT history.

The history of QAHC is intertwined with the history of the HIV-AIDS (Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) epidemic. HIV, is transmitted through bodily fluids such as blood, semen, vaginal fluids, preseminal fluids and breast milk. It emerged from Africa and probably entered America and Europe through Haiti. It was first identified in the United States in 1982. Between 1981 and 2007, the epidemic killed more than 25 million people. Today, an estimated 33.2 million people are living with HIV-AIDS.²

HIV does not discriminate and globally, more heterosexual than homosexual people currently are living with the virus. While the virus does not discriminate, historically many people have. Within Australia, the epidemic particularly impacted on the gay male community, along with people living with haemophilia, intravenous drug users and people who received transfused blood before 1985.³ This unfortunately led to some very anti-gay reactions from some politicians and other people.

The brave individuals who came together to form the organisation initially known as the Queensland AIDS Committee were drawn

Q.A.C.



together out of a sense of concern about what the newly arrived 'AIDS virus' could mean for Queensland's homosexual community.⁴ As a result, the organisation focused on educational, charitable and community goals and provided support to a vulnerable group of people who were appallingly neglected by the then Queensland government.

QuAC's early years were not always easy in the repressive political climate but the organisation persevered with some truly dedicated staff, volunteers, financial donors and supporters. Wise financial management, a changing state government and ongoing support from the Federal Health Minister and government all helped the organisation to survive.

By the early 1990s, community awareness about the impact of HIV-AIDS was high. There have been obstacles along the way and triumphs too. All workers in the field of HIV-AIDS welfare and prevention speak with great joy about the revolutionary combination medications which have extended the life expectancies of many People Living With HIV-AIDS (PLWHA).⁵

It is impossible to list all the people who have helped QAHC to flourish. They range from the individuals who attended early meetings held in Brisbane bars to the partners of those who supported and continue to support QAHC workers and volunteers. They include those who wrote letters to newspapers, spoke to a frequently hostile media and those who

sent in donations they often could barely afford. The Sisters of Mercy, those health care professionals and many volunteers who supported PLWHA must also be acknowledged. Of course, the managerial staff, various presidents and board members have guided the organisation through a rapidly changing society. PLWHA have also taken leading roles within the organisation.

The organisation that began as the Queensland AIDS Committee has evolved with changing times. In 2006, QuAC recognised its shifting role by altering its name to the Queensland Association for Healthy Communities. While maintaining a focus on HIV prevention, broader LGBT health and welfare issues are also accorded importance. The current General Manager, Paul Martin, is well-prepared to steer QAHC into the future, bringing with him not only a determination to address the needs of a diverse LGBT community but a wealth of experience. Current President Mark Morein has also spoken of his optimism for the future and his pride at being associated with QAHC's proud history.⁶ Overall, if the past is any indication, QAHC looks certain to continue to engage with the LGBT community and play an important role in our lives well into the future.

A MEETING CONCERNING AIDS

A meeting to discuss action involving the AIDS issue will be held next Tuesday, July 12. The meeting will be at ZULOO's, in the Hacienda Hotel, at 6 p.m. This will allow those who wish to go on to other activities to do so, so come straight from work. Parking in the area at that time of day should be no problem.

THE FOLLOWING TOPICS HAVE BEEN SET DOWN FOR THE AGENDA

1. Formation of a committee to organise fundraising activities which will assist with research into AIDS.
2. A discussion on the types of research that can be carried out, and the costs involved in such research.
3. Organisation of meetings that will give members of the community up-to-date information on the disease.
4. Discussion of formation of a 'support' group within the community to provide support to anyone who may contact the disease.
5. General discussion.

David Wheatley
Convenor

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SCENE

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SCENE

The magazine for gays and those interested in the gay lifestyle

ON THE SCENE ...

By now there can hardly be any person in Australia who has not heard of the dreaded AIDS — the many reports, often presented in a highly hysterical manner, that have appeared in the mass circulation media have ensured that it has become a subject that the community at large knows something about.

The problem is that the 'something' is often based on misconceptions, or in some cases, downright sensationalism.

The result has been to engender something almost akin to hysteria within sections of the gay community.

In this issue, one of the state's senior medical people gives an explanation of the condition. We think it is one of the most balanced reports we've seen. You'll find it on page 4.

One area that does give cause for concern is that sections of the medical fraternity are going to set in AIDS a parental guidance and 'marked' series of expensive tests — and given the fact that the early symptoms of the syndrome can be common in many complaints there could be an awful lot of people spending a great deal of money to live the pockets of a few opportunistic medicals.

Yet there are several things that we, as a community can do, not only to help fight the problem in the medical sense, but also to help offset some of the bad press that gays have received in the last few months.

Next Tuesday, July 12, I will be chairing a public meeting at Zulu's — full details are on page 5. I would hope to see as many of you there as possible.

There has been concern expressed that in becoming involved with the AIDS issue, the gay community is expressing 'self'. I feel that objection can be answered by positive action, and carefully presented publicity to counter some of the previous hysterical stories.

AIDS is an issue that involves all of us — unfortunately, it just isn't going to go away, but I do think it is time that the gay community started to fight back.

David Wheatley

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The World

AIDS epidemic could be 'unparalleled in history'

LONDON.— New evidence about the killer disease AIDS suggests it could produce an epidemic of a magnitude unparalleled in history, says an editorial in this month's Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine.

AIDS, or acquired immune deficiency syndrome, which weakens the body's ability to fight disease, has claimed 12,000 victims in the United States alone. Their plight was spotlighted last week when it was announced that film star Rock Hudson had AIDS.

In a report summing up recent research, former venereology consultant, John Seale, said the nature of AIDS had been misunderstood on a monumental scale.

If recent evidence is correct, "it would

produce a lethal pandemic throughout the crowded cities and villages of the Third World of a magnitude unparalleled in human history."

AIDS was now believed to be only part of a group of symptoms caused by a single, unique virus new to man. This virus was similar to infections known as lentiviruses, previously only found in sheep, horses and goats, he said.

"In domestic animals lentivirus infections have proved so lethal and unresponsive to treatment, and vaccines have proved so useless, that slaughter of infected animals has been the universal means of control."

Noting the AIDS virus can be carried for

years without the victim knowing, he said it would be unlike other epidemics which could burn themselves out after rapidly killing their victims. An AIDS epidemic would be self-sustaining.

The AIDS virus, carried in the blood, was not necessarily sexually transmitted, Seale said.

It could also be transmitted by close non-sexual contact between cuts and sores and the blood of other people which commonly occurred, particularly among children.

"The AIDS virus is spreading as a virgin-soil epidemic throughout mankind after crossing the species barrier, probably from the green monkey," he added. (Reuter)

1: Journalist David Wheatley calls for a public meeting to discuss the AIDS epidemic (Scene, 8 July 1983)

2: Brisbane's gay community newspaper calls for a unified approach towards the AIDS epidemic (Scene, 8 July 1983)

3: By the mid-1980s, the medical community stressed that the HIV-AIDS epidemic could be 'unparalleled in history' (Courier Mail, 31 July 1985).

A new threat: Concern mounts

In many ways, it is difficult to conceive how different LGBT lives were in Queensland in the early 1980s, when news of HIV-AIDS first reached Australia. Male to male sexual activity in Queensland was illegal at this point (and would remain so until 1990) and the Joh Bjelke-Petersen government that held power had accrued a reputation for homophobic policies and rhetoric. Amongst other policies, this government refused to employ openly gay and lesbian teachers and used young male police officers as agent provocateurs to entrap gay men in sexual situations and then arrest them.

Although the political situation was difficult, gay men and lesbians were also experiencing an increased sense of liberation. This was manifested with the opening of a Brisbane branch of the homosexual liberation organisation, Campaign Against Moral Persecution (CAMP), in 1971.⁷

From 1982 onwards, the gay community within Australia knew that there had been reports of gay men in America suffering mysterious symptoms of compromised immune systems. One of the main signs that an epidemic was growing were the increasing numbers of men being diagnosed with the previously rare form of cancer, Kaposi's Sarcoma, and other devastating opportunistic infections.⁸

The first case of AIDS in Australia was diagnosed in November of 1982 and members of Queensland's gay community felt deep concern that the disease would have severe implications for their community. Kaposi's Sarcoma was not quite as visible in Queensland. As Bill Rutkin points out though, "one of

the main local signs that an epidemic was growing was the increasing numbers of men who stopped coming to the bars or beats and who withdrew from their social circle as they developed symptoms."⁹

In 1983, two men, including Niels Vanderbeek, returned from Melbourne with further information about the potential impact of the AIDS epidemic.¹⁰ As concern mounted, in July of 1983, David Wheatley, the editor of a Brisbane gay newspaper, the Scene, asked members of the community to attend a public meeting. This meeting was held at the popular gay venue, Zuloos, on Brunswick Street in the Fortitude Valley.¹¹

Greg Weir, who attended this meeting, recorded that about thirty to forty men who "reflected a fairly wide range of people" took part in a discussion which was convened by David Wheatley. Niels Vanderbeek, Peter McGee, Blair Edmunds (a radio personality) and Weir himself were also noted as being particularly active contributors at this meeting.¹²

John Ebert, who also attended the meeting, along with John Stafford, remembers that Toye Wilde played an instrumental role in bringing people together to discuss the potential epidemic. He also recalls the emotional atmosphere of the meeting, with many in attendance fearing that the epidemic could impact on them.¹³

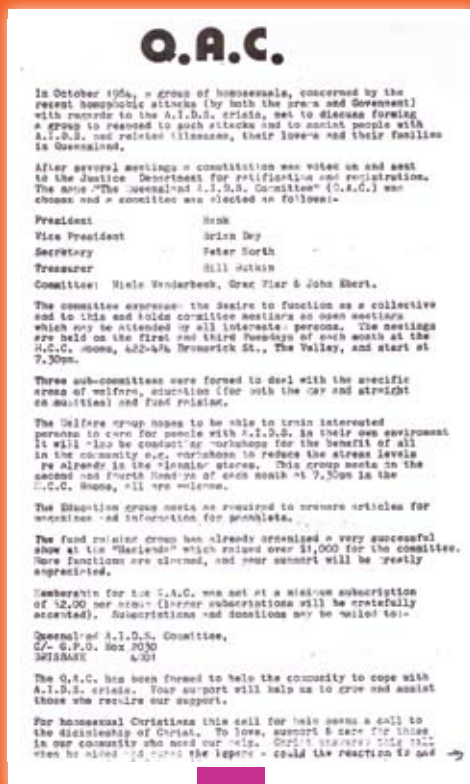
Those who attended this meeting agreed to form a support group called the Queensland AIDS Action Committee for those who might be diagnosed with AIDS. They also agreed to lobby the Queensland government for welfare and support for those affected by the epidemic.¹⁴



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- 1: On 16 November 1984, a Brisbane newspaper reports that three babies have died of AIDS-related illnesses and that a fourth baby is seriously ill. (Greg Weir Collection, Fryer Library, University of Queensland)
- 2: Article from the Catholic newsletter Acceptance, Autumn 1985, noting the formation of the Queensland AIDS Council and first office bearers (special thanks to John Ebert and John Stafford for the provision of this source)
- 3: Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen was quick to use homophobia for political purposes (Daily Sun, 23 November 1984).
- 4: In early 1985, the Queensland AIDS Committee advised that its main goals were education, welfare and research and offered support across the state (QAHC Archives).

Fighting fear: A community comes together

The meeting at Zuloos in 1983 had drawn together members of very different sections of the gay community and had shown that the community was preparing for the arrival of AIDS. It was events in 1984 though, that saw the less formal AIDS Action Committee grow into the Queensland AIDS Committee, which would eventually end up becoming the Queensland Association for Healthy Communities.

On 15 November 1984, the Queensland Health Minister, Brian Austin, confirmed fears that the Bjelke-Petersen government was prepared to use homophobia as a political tool when he announced that three babies had died in the state after receiving blood contaminated with HIV. He also informed the media that a fourth baby was seriously ill in the Mater Hospital and that the blood had been donated by a 27-year-old gay man.¹⁵

Following Austin's announcement, over the next few weeks the Queensland media carried a series of highly inflammatory, defamatory and homophobic articles about the gay community and the donor of the HIV contaminated blood. Joh Bjelke-Petersen himself inflamed tensions with highly offensive comments about homosexuality.



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This caused around thirty concerned gay men – many who had attended the previous meeting at Zuloos – to meet on the 27 November 1984 at the Ambush Bar at the Alliance Hotel.¹⁶ It was at this meeting that the tentative steps towards a formal organisation that had occurred the previous year were solidified and the Queensland AIDS Committee was formally born.

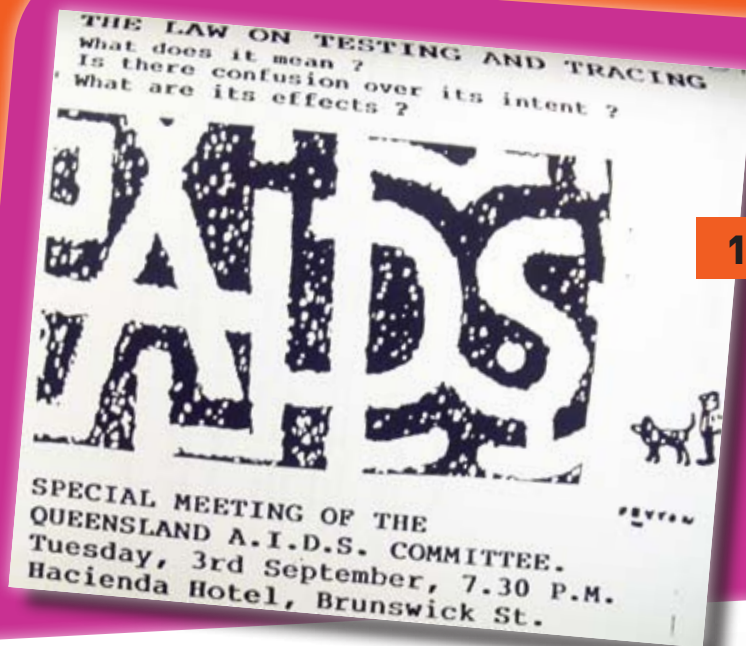
The Queensland AIDS Committee was founded to assist those who were living with AIDS, including the donor of the contaminated blood who was in desperate need of support. The Committee also intended to provide education and information to both the LGBT community and the broader community. It received no government funding and it was driven by volunteers.

The initial office bearers were Hank Spierings as President, Brian Day as Vice President and Media Spokesperson, Peter North as Secretary, Bill Rutkin as Treasurer and John Ebert, Niels Vanderbeek and Greg Weir as committee members. Bill Rutkin recalls assuming the Presidency in 1985 and he held this position until 1992.¹⁷

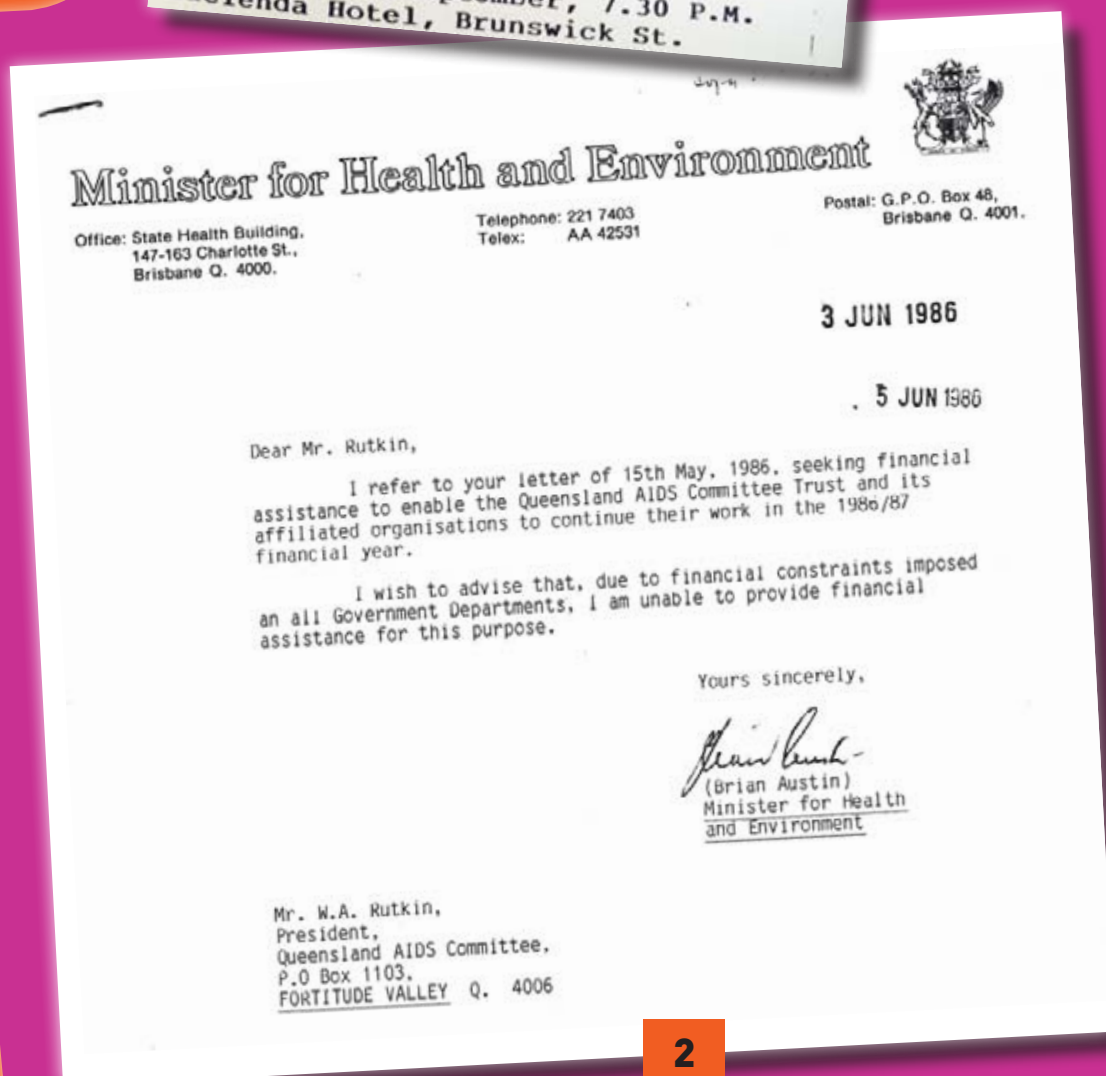
In 1984, as the process of registering the organisation as a charity would take some time, Bill Rutkin, on behalf of the Committee, established a Trust, a corporate entity, which was legally able to accept government grants, donations and conduct business. The first trustees were Phillip Tahmindjis, Jacqueline Gartside and Nora Peck.¹⁸

5: On 7 December 1984, Niels C. Vanderbeek, Spokesperson for the AIDS Action Committee, writes a letter to the Queensland Department of Health advising them of the establishment of the Committee (Greg Weir Collection, Fryer Library, University of Queensland).

6: National newspapers such as the Australian also published vehemently anti-homosexual cartoons in these early years (Australian, 1 February 1985).



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1: Consultation with the community was important during the early years of the Committee (Duck News: The Queensland AIDS Committee Newsletter, 3 September 1985).

2: Health Minister Brian Austin refused to fund the Queensland AIDS Committee well into 1986 (3 June 1986, QAHC Archives).

Early years: Foes and Friends

The early years of the Queensland AIDS Committee were far from easy. The Bjelke-Petersen government maintained a strong stance against funding the Committee, or even opening discussions with office bearers. This caused severe tensions between the Queensland government and the Federal government.

Despite this, the organisation pushed ahead with its aims. By mid-December 1984, cards explaining safe and unsafe sex practices had been designed and were being distributed in beats and bars. In July of 1985, the Council rented a house and had a telephone connected. Later, during the Grim Reaper era, this phone-line operated for 24 hours a day.

Once a blood test became available (April 1985) for HIV antibodies, the restoration of faith in medical authorities acting on behalf of the Queensland government was crucial. Recent raids on the Greenslopes abortion clinic had made many deeply suspicious of the privacy of medical consultations and information. It should be remembered that at the time, the Criminal Code published sodomy with 14 years imprisonment though manslaughter was punished with 7 years. In order to rebuild trust in the system, members of the Queensland AIDS Council were publicly tested for HIV.¹⁹

The Queensland government continued to frustrate the organisation's attempts to register as an incorporated organisation and thus precluded it from registering as a charitable body. In October of 1986, the Queensland AIDS Committee became the Queensland AIDS Council Inc after the Queensland government

argued that the word "Committee" made it appear that QuAC was a government body. The Committee had already obliged the extremely miffed management of the Queensland Agricultural College at Gatton by adopting the acronym QuAC so that members of the public would not confuse the business of the two organisations. QAC had threatened to sue to protect their reputation. They were shortly afterwards incorporated into the University of Queensland and disappeared as a distinct entity in any case.

After the name change in October of 1986, and some speedy lodging of paperwork, directly requested in a phone call by the responsible Minister while Joh Bjelke-Petersen was interstate, the state government finally approved QuAC's registration as an incorporated organisation.²⁰

The staff and volunteers from these early years, which included People Living with HIV/AIDS, made extraordinary sacrifices to keep QAC/QuAC running. At this time, male-to-male sexual acts were still illegal and there was reason to fear that the hostility of the Queensland government towards QuAC could escalate. People like Bill Rutkin, Peter North and Malcolm McCamish, put in enormous amounts of time and even gave their own money to keep the organisation running when things were difficult.

As Michael Carden wrote in 1989, when he praised the efforts of Bill Rutkin, Dr Malcolm McCamish, Peter North, Dr Peter Foote and Toye Wilde:

It is sometimes easy to forget just what it was like four years ago. An epidemic was unfolding that was surrounded by prejudice, fear and misinformation. The social and political climate in Queensland was marked by vindictiveness and opportunism. It took courage and dedication to take the stand they did and keep to it.²¹

Peter North stresses that Geraldine Lee, QuAC's early co-ordinator, played an important role in ensuring the smooth running of the organisation in its difficult early years.

There were some valuable supporters of the organisation's work in these early years though. The Campaign Against Moral Persecution (CAMP), which was fading from the Brisbane scene by the early 1980s, made a very generous bequest that gave QuAC a financial start.²² The Sisters of Mercy and Sister Angela Mary Doyle, the Administrator of the three Mater Hospitals, were particularly important. In 1986, they gave the Council access to a small house behind the Mater Hospital to use for accommodation of PLWHA and helped channel funds and vital resources to QAC/QuAC. They also rented QuAC office space at Stanley Street, Woolloongabba, which allowed the organisation to leave the building in Fortitude Valley on which it had taken a month-to-month lease.²³

Bill Rutkin worked closely with the Sisters of Mercy to ensure that Federal funds reached the organisation and those who were vitally dependent on this assistance.²⁴ Until Mike Ahern assumed the Queensland Premiership, the Federal Health Minister, Neal Blewett, gave grants to the Sisters of Mercy, who then passed the entirety of the funds through to QuAC. The Sisters of Mercy had to be discreet about this though, as they risked losing Bjelke-Petersen funding for their hospitals if their role became too public. Their important channelling of Federal funds by the Sisters of Mercy saw the

Federal Health Minister Neal Blewett refer to them as "the most cheerful and altruistic of money-launderers."²⁵

As has already been mentioned, the Sisters of Mercy also assisted with the accommodation of People Living With HIV/AIDS and provided a house on Allen Street, which was at first used to accommodate PLWHA from outside of Brisbane who were visiting the city for medical visits. The Allen Street building later came to house the activities of the PLWHA support group. Allen Street was also the first home of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Centre, which was subsequently moved to Gladstone Road when QuAC borrowed money and purchased a large house for the purpose.²⁶

It is important to note that a significant number of health professionals, including some St Luke's nurses, and homosexual and heterosexual health professionals, also gave time and advice to the organisation at this stage.²⁷ Val Gibbs, the St Luke's Director and Pat Wall, the first St Luke's nurse involved with QuAC, were particularly generous with support. Legal support was generously provided through Neil Woodgate's, Trevor Watts and Dianne Soon's law firms.²⁸

1: Promotional advertisement for Operation Vampire in 1986 (QAHC Archives).

2: Peter North from the Queensland AIDS Committee assists a volunteer donating blood for Operation Vampire (Courier-Mail, 31 July 1986).

Operation Vampire

One of the earliest campaigns run by QuAC in late July of 1986 played a vital role in obtaining information about HIV-AIDS, while also informing the community about the epidemic. The campaign, called Operation Vampire, was organised by QuAC together with Dr Ian Frazer of the Princess Alexander Hospital. Ian Frazer would later go on to be named Australian of Year in 2006 for his other scientific achievements.

Operation Vampire was a research programme designed to establish:

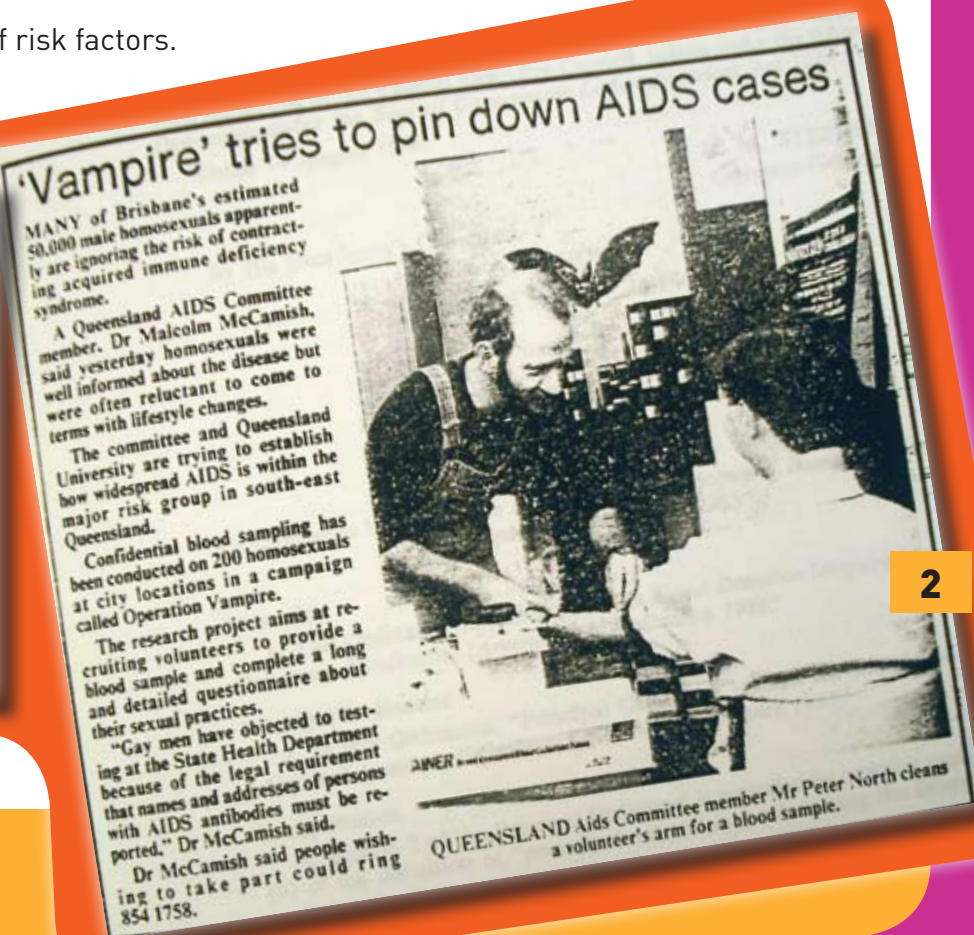
- Projected medical and welfare needs in the area of AIDS in Queensland;
- Antibody status of high risk groups in Queensland;
- Rates of seroconversion – ie – infection in Queensland;
- Basic correlation of risk factors.

As QuAC told readers of *Duck News*, “by participating in Operation Vampire you can make a very positive contribution not just to ‘the gay community’ but to medical knowledge in Queensland.”²⁹

Those who donated blood did so under the supervision of nurses and doctors at gay venues including the Hacienda in the Fortitude Valley. The study assured confidentiality for those who donated blood, although they were able to use a PIN number to later find out their results if they wished. By cleverly labelling the campaign a ‘screening’ rather than a ‘test’, the AIDS Council circumvented Queensland Health regulations that meant those diagnosed with HIV-AIDS would come under restrictive government regulations.



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NOTICE OF SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING.

All financial members, volunteers and friends of the Queensland AIDS Council are invited to attend a special meeting of the Queensland AIDS Council convened to address the issue of:

THE ROLE AND ACTIVITIES OF THE QUEENSLAND AIDS COUNCIL IN ADDRESSING DECRIMINALIZATION OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN QUEENSLAND and THE ISSUES OF ENTICEMENT AND ENTRAPMENT IN PUBLIC TOILETS.

VENUE - Queensland AIDS Council Rooms, 546 Stanley St. South Brisbane.

DATE - Tuesday 5th. July commencing 7.30 pm.

Persons wishing to address the meeting on these issues are invited to indicate their intention to Mrs. Pat. Mephram, Administration Officer on 844-1990 so that speakers can be scheduled.

Speakers are encouraged to prepare their positions as all addresses will be strictly limited to 10 minutes speaking time.

After addresses the meeting will be opened to discussion and debate.

PLEASE NOTE THAT VOTING ON QUAC POLICY IS RESTRICTED TO CURRENT FINANCIAL MEMBERS.

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Growth

Although state politics did not always make running a community health organisation strongly linked to the gay community easy, the Queensland AIDS Council continued to consolidate and grow.

By late 1986, QuAC had taken up residence in the Stanley Street offices and employed two full-time staff, an administrator and a co-ordinator. Also in this year, when Mike Ahern replaced Brian Austin as Health Minister, QuAC was able to organise a more open dialogue with the Government. Funding no longer had to be channelled through the Sisters of Mercy. Peter North, who served in a number of capacities at QuAC, noted this as an important milestone.³⁰

Successful advertising campaigns, a growing awareness of HIV-AIDS amongst the community and sound management by the QuAC board in this era saw the organisation in a stable position. Providing accommodation for People Living With HIV-AIDS, though, continued to be a pressing issue. In July of 1987,

using funds bequeathed by the CAMP Club, the Council placed a deposit on a block of flats in Vulture Street, East Brisbane, to accommodate PLWHA. That same year, the Council employed its first Education Officer.

As early as 1986, largely because of the courage and personal sacrifices of volunteers and supporters, QuAC had branches across the state. It employed full-time staff and it provided a wide range of services and engaged in a constructive and productive way with both the State Government of the day and the Commonwealth Government.

Membership figures show that by June of 1991, QuAC had 790 members throughout the state. Eleven positions were funded in Brisbane, along with single positions in Townsville and Cairns and two positions in both the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast. It is hardly surprising that the President in that year, Bill Rutkin, spoke of QuAC having achieved a “maturity and expertise that is uncommon in community based organizations.”

1: The Queensland AIDS Council had also branched out into areas involving gay rights by 1990. This memo advertises a meeting being held about the decriminalisation of male to male sexual activity (QAHC Archives).

2: By 1990, QuAC's advertising efforts were being consolidated (Duck News, November 1990).

3: By the early 1990s, QuAC's staff had developed a highly effective education and awareness campaigns. Pictured are Education staff members (from back to front) Craig Patterson, Patrick Martin, Amanda Forbes, Daryl Kosch, Paul Martin and Nick Ward (QAHC Archives).

The Impact of the Grim Reaper Campaign

It is impossible to discuss the history of HIV/AIDS organisations in the 1980s without addressing the impact of the Grim Reaper campaign of April 1987.

The Grim Reaper campaign was put together by the National Advisory Commission on AIDS (NACAIDS). The intension of the campaign was to increase awareness of HIV-AIDS amongst heterosexuals and intravenous drug users.

The campaign involved the screening of a television commercial featuring the Grim Reaper bowling over human beings in a bowling alley. It was a graphic, and in many ways disturbing, campaign, which caused both fear and awareness amongst the broader community.

Ann Coburn, who served on the executive of QuAC and also acted as volunteer co-ordinator for the organisation at times, described the significant impact this campaign had on QuAC resources. She wrote that QuAC was so overwhelmed with telephone calls as a result of this campaign that it began its first 24 hour telephone counselling service. She wrote “in six weeks, we took over 5000 calls.”³¹

QuAC cheekily referenced the Grim Reaper campaign at the 26th Annual Queens’s Ball held in Fortitude Valley in 1987. Volunteers, including Bill Rutkin, dressed up as the Brothers Grim and handed out condoms in matchbook covers amongst the 3000 attendees at the Ball.



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Today, many HIV-AIDS and gay and lesbian health organisations debate the effectiveness of the Grim Reaper campaign. It did raise awareness of HIV-AIDS but also led to many low-risk individuals placing significant demands on testing facilities and on AIDS organisations.

1: The \$3.63 million Grim Reaper Campaign mounted by the Federal National Advisory Committee on AIDS (NACAIDS) caused an upsurge in phone calls to QuAC (QAHC Archives).

A Leading Role

The years from 1989 through until the mid-1990s were QuAC's most successful as an HIV-AIDS welfare, charity and support organisation. It was also the period when there was the greatest engagement with the broader community

The 1989 change of state governments permitted a closer relationship between QuAC and the state government and also saw funding expansion.

This was also an era when there was enormous community interest in the epidemic of HIV-AIDS and concern over how best to support People Living With HIV-AIDS. While the gay community had been living with epidemic since the early 1980s, increasing numbers of the broader community wanted to show their support for those living with HIV-AIDS and to acknowledge the toll the epidemic had taken.

Writing in 1989, Michael Carden noted that QuAC:

*Has developed from humble beginnings and against all odds into a state-wide organisation. Its services and achievements are something of which all of us,, members, staff, volunteers and supporters can be proud.*³²

By 1991, the future for QuAC was not in doubt. Financial challenges had been resolved, much of the public ignorance and fear towards HIV-AIDS had been challenged and the Queensland government was actively working with QuAC to ensure better health care for those living with HIV-AIDS.



Writing in 1992, Bill Rutkin noted that "the Council for almost a decade has gone from strength to strength [and] the refinement and flexibility of our operations now extend to many areas of community service..."³³

It is noteworthy that successful community education activities promoting World AIDS Day had been staged since 1988.

The growth and expansion saw QuAC relocate offices from Woolloongabba to South Brisbane in November of 1993 and in June of 1994, the Gold Coast office also moved to larger premises.

1: By 1994, QuAC was proudly celebrating ten years of service and engagement with the community (QAHC Archives).

2: In November 1993, QuAC's expansions saw it move offices from Woolloongabba to Peel Street, South Brisbane. This photograph shows the office circa 1995 (QAHC Archives).

3: David Rowley, who served as QuAC's volunteer co-ordinator, with QuAC volunteers circa early-1990s (QAHC Archives).



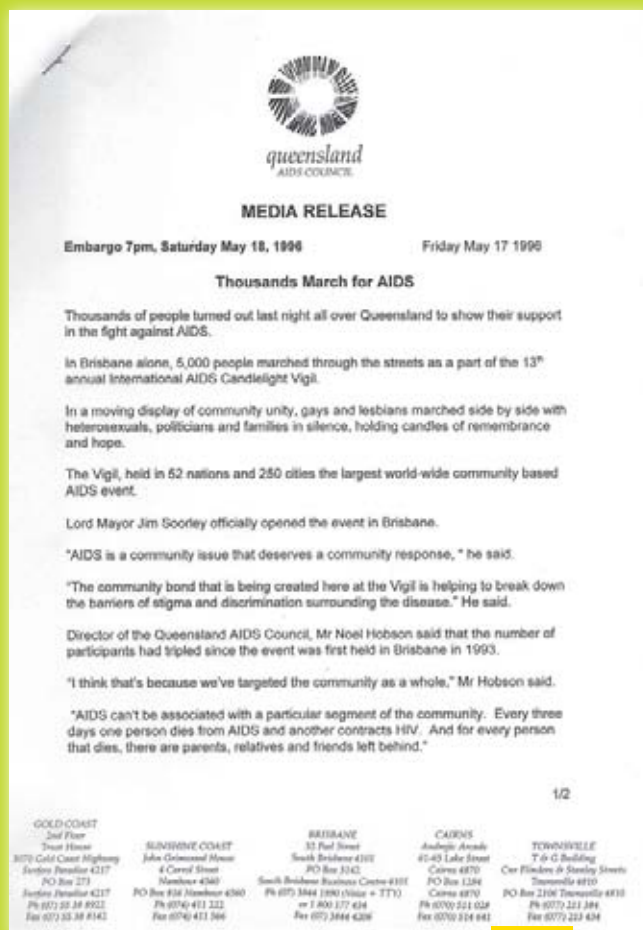
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Candlelight Vigils and Memorial Quilts

The early 1990s saw QuAC stage some very successful Candlelight Vigils across Queensland. QuAC office staff were also involved in the construction of an Australian AIDS Memorial Quilt.

Smaller Candlelight Vigils had been previously held in Brisbane but in 1994 Brisbane joined 230 other cities in 40 nations in the first International Candlelight Vigil organised by QuAC with the assistance of Queensland Positive People.³⁴ This Vigil was held in Brisbane's Suncorp Piazza at Southbank Parklands and many Brisbane residents acknowledged the toll of HIV-AIDS

In 1996, numbers significantly increased with 5000 people marching through Brisbane, with Lord Mayor Jim Soorley officiating. Vigils were also held in regional locations such as Cairns and Townsville.

The Candlelight Vigils served a number of purposes. First, they were a very

important way that all those who had lost loved ones through HIV-AIDS were able to mourn for their loss. Secondly, the Vigils showed important community support for People Living With HIV-AIDS and provided a way for PLWHA to feel supported by the community. Finally, the Vigils were a crucial means of increasing awareness about the impact of HIV-AIDS.

The Australian AIDS Quilt was launched in Sydney in 1988 and was displayed in the Brisbane City Hall in 1991 with the support of Queensland Positive People. QuAC was responsible for several sections of the quilt and today, the Australian Quilt still remains the largest Quilt constructed outside of the United States of America.

In 1994, QuAC noted that events such as World AIDS Day Services, Candlelight Vigils and the unfolding of the Quilt were "seen as a necessary healing process" to help deal with the grief and loss associated with the HIV-AIDS epidemic.



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- 1: Poster advertising the 1995 Candlelight Vigil (QAHC Archives).
- 2: The Australian Commemorative Quilt came to Brisbane in the mid-1990s (QAHC Archives).
- 3: QuAC volunteers showing their support for People Living With HIV-AIDS and those who have been affected by the epidemic at the 1997 Candlelight Vigil (QAHC Archives).
- 4: 1996 QuAC media release noting the success of the Candlelight Vigil that year (QAHC Archives).
- 5: QuAC entrance foyer with Quilt commemorating those lost to HIV-AIDS in Queensland (QAHC Archives).
- 6: By the mid-1990s, thousands of people were attending the Candlelight Vigil held annually at Suncorp Piazza, Southbank (QAHC Archives).



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- 1: Although the late 1990s were a difficult time for QuAC, the organisation still maintained a strong presence in the community, including at the 1999 Brisbane Pride March (QAHC Archives).
- 2: The QuAC Board pulled together to ease the organisation through a challenging time (QAHC Archives).
- 3: Moves to outsource support services for People Living with HIV-AIDS to St Luke's caused considerable protest amongst the community (QAHC Archives).

Challenges

The period from the late 1990s to the early 2000s was in many ways a difficult time for QuAC. The organisation had to contend with internal divisions, as well as a major debate over the role the organisation should play in the care of People Living with HIV-AIDS. For all those working in the field of HIV-AIDS education and welfare, there was cause for enormous optimism though, as new combination therapies greatly extended the life expectancies of many PLWHA.

One of the major challenges QuAC faced in this era involved the removal of Noel Hobson from his position of Administrative Director in December of 1994. His unexpected departure caused a number of staffing divisions but Adrian Lovney guided the organisation through this period by assuming the position of President, while Matt Gillett assumed the position of General Manager.

Writing as President in 1994, Mike Kennedy insightfully pointed out that QuAC's future depended on the organisation:

*recaptur[ing] the vitality which marked the formation of the Council a decade ago. We need to ask ourselves again what it means to be a community organisation, how we make ourselves accountable to the gay and lesbian community from which we grew and how we can involve those communities more closely in the work of the Council and in setting future directions.*³⁵

Kennedy's insight did point a way forward for QuAC. Alan Hough's supportive role in this difficult era has also been commended by a number of individuals associated with QuAC in this period. In 1997, the composition of the Board of Directors was altered to prevent future divisions occurring.

Further problems occurred in 2004 when the Queensland Labor Government announced that both HIV Services and GAY/MSM HIV Prevention would be put out for competitive tender and QuAC lost the HIV Services tender to St Luke's.³⁶ Kevin Marriot and Steven Brown from QuAC worked tirelessly to ensure that HIV-AIDS services would suffer as little disruption as possible during this transition. Many people associated with QuAC point out that Rodney Goodbun, who served as President during this difficult time, did an extraordinary job of guiding the organisation through this turmoil.

It is likely that the tendering problems occurred for a combination of reasons. First, the partnership between Queensland Health and QuAC had weakened. Secondly, there was a perception in the Health Department that QuAC was not responding quickly enough to new HIV-AIDS medications such as Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Therapy (HAART) and Post-Exposure Prevention (PEP) which were changing the behaviour of gay men and men who have sex with men.

QuAC's relationship with People Living With HIV-AIDS also suffered in this era. The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACTUP) arrived in Australia in 1990 and its more aggressive stance appealed to some PLWHA. Tensions between some members of QuAC and Queensland Positive People were played out in the media during 2000 but ultimately QuAC worked with a number of representatives from the community of PLWHA to try to ensure their autonomy was respected. In retrospect, lessons were learnt in this era and it paved the way for a period of regeneration and change in the future.



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Have you had a sexual health check-up recently?

There has been an increase in syphilis, HIV and chlamydia infections in Brisbane.

Speak with the following services about sexual health check-ups:

- 1) Your Doctor (GP)
- 2) Brisbane Sexual Health Clinic - 3227 8666
- 3) Princess Alexandra Sexual Health(PASH) - 3240 5881



Many sexually transmitted infections don't show symptoms – and if they're not treated they can cause serious illness and/or infertility for you and your partner.

Using condoms and getting a regular sexual health check-up is part of a healthy sex life.

check ✓



www.qahc.org.au

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Transition and Looking to the Future

The years from 2005 onwards were a period of considerable transition and revitalisation for the Queensland AIDS Council. Enormous changes in HIV-AIDS medication, coupled with the outsourcing of health care for positive people meant that the traditional role of QuAC had to evolve in order to continue making an important and relevant contribution to an LGBT community whose needs had shifted considerably over the past decade.

In June of 2006, the organisation formally recognised its shifting role by adopting a new name, the Queensland Association for Healthy Communities. It also embarked on a two-year strategic plan called "Looking Into The Future."³⁷

As part of this evolution, QAHC's role has now expanded to encompass broader lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender health. QAHC still maintains a focus on its traditional core work of health promotion and information amongst gay men and men who have sex with men.

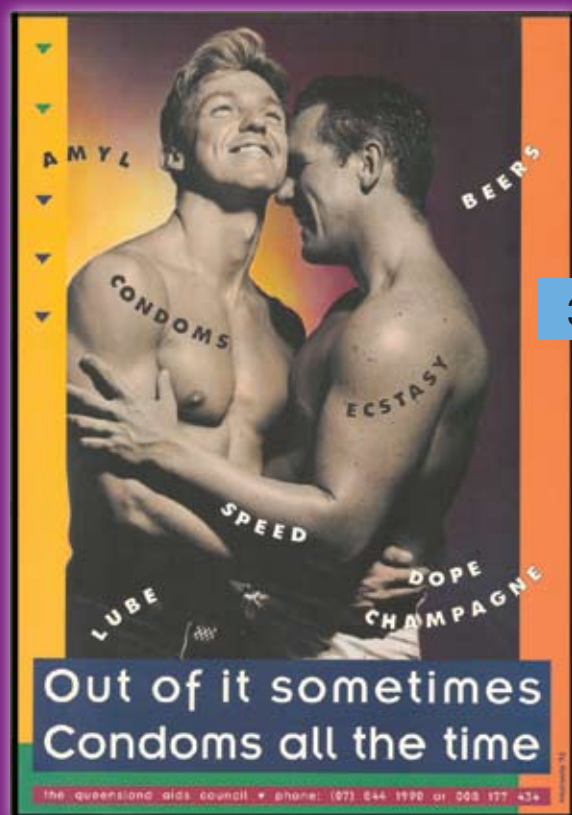
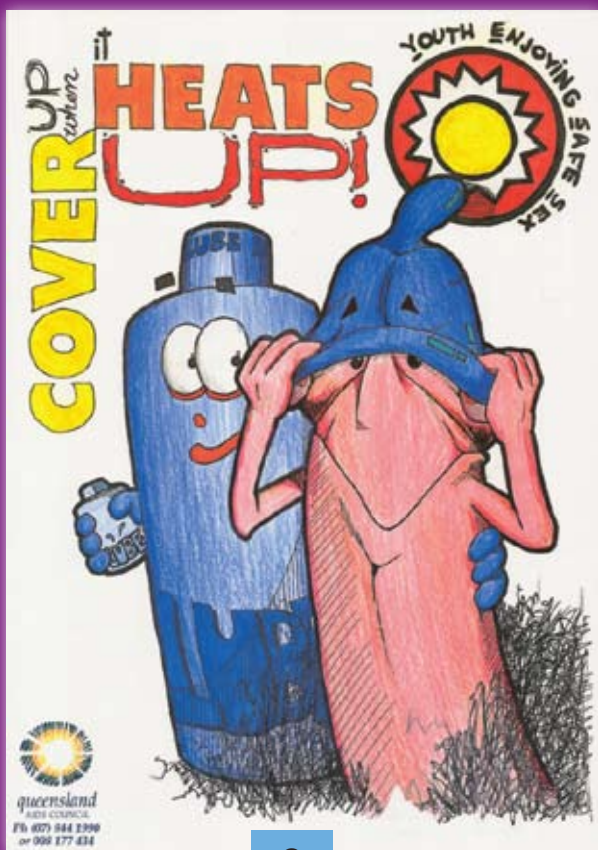
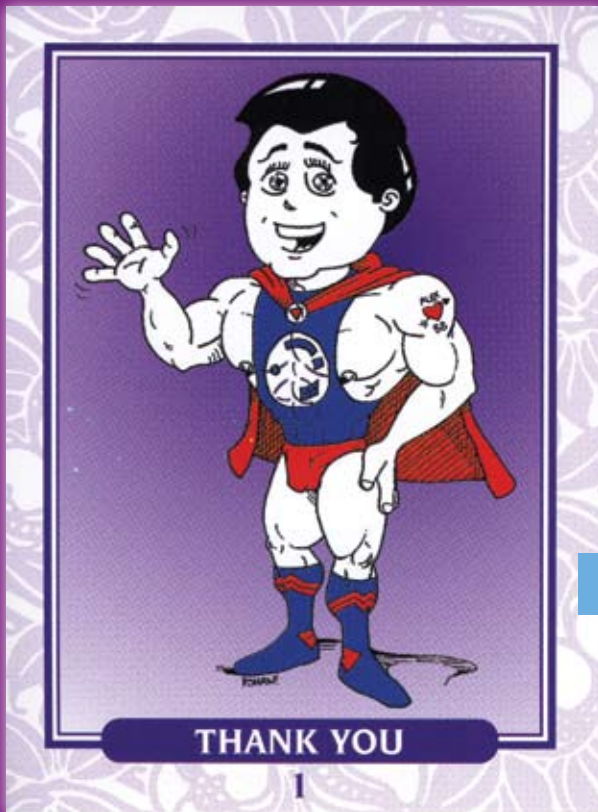
QAHC actively supports a range of other smaller LGBT community organisations,

including PFLAG, the Gay and Lesbian Welfare Association, and the Brisbane Pride Festival. All up, over 20 groups and projects have received funding through the Healthy Communities Fund.³⁸

As has been mentioned, the new direction of QAHC is well served by the experiences of the current General Manager, Paul Martin. Paul has previously worked in a variety of capacities for the organisation, ranging from volunteering to managing projects and working on education, youth and outreach campaigns. He then spent time working in health fields in Sydney and the United Kingdom before returning to Brisbane and QAHC. This broader perspective will serve QAHC well as it looks to the future.

Current board members also bring with them practical skills, an optimistic outlook and a desire to engage in a constructive and valuable way with the LGBT community. Based on current planning and QAHC's ability to shift and grow with the community, it seems that its future as a LGBT health organisation looks assured for another 25 years.

- 1: The new QAHC logo has been successfully used to promote the health and welfare aims of the relaunched organisation. (QAHC Archives).
- 2: QAHC supporters enjoying the launch of the new state-wide headquarters and LGBT community Resource Centre in Brisbane in 2006 (QAHC Archives).
- 3: As QuAC refocused its energies on broader LGBT health, it launched a sexual health campaign targeted across this broader community (QAHC Archives).



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Campaigns and Controversies

Advertising campaigns have played an invaluable role in informing the LGBT community about vital health and welfare matters over the past twenty-five years. Distributing straightforward material that speaks in a voice that is understood by readers, however, has not been without challenges. There have been many conservative challenges to QuAC campaigns.

The first advertising campaign that was mounted by the Queensland AIDS Council in August of 1985 saw thirty Brisbane City Council buses carrying large side-panel advertisements with the contact telephone number for the AIDS Council.³⁹

In 1988, QuAC attracted considerable controversy when two publications the organisation had designed were deemed “offensive” and banned by the state government. The first publication, a brochure entitled ‘New Rules For Safe Sex’ had been considered one of the most successful early publications of the organisation because it presented safe-sex information in a way that was understood by members of the gay

community. The second publication was a comic that had been designed for distribution amongst intravenous drug users.⁴⁰

Another major controversy erupted in 1995-1996 when the state government banned the distribution of Bubble Boy cards, which were meant to provide safe-sex information to gay men in gay venues.⁴¹

To this day though, print campaigns and advertisements in queer venues remain the most effective method of reaching out to the LGBT community and informing them of matters that impact on their health and welfare. Troy Hakala was involved in some ground-breaking internet campaigns in the early 2000s.

Recent campaigns have focused on HIV prevention but have also reflected issues of current concern to the LGBT community by focusing on mental health issues, lesbian health and issues that impact on older members of the LGBT community.

- 1: Images of some cards from the “Bubble Boy” campaign banned c1995-1996 [Special thanks to Phillip C. for his assistance with these images]
- 2: Poster designed by QuAC and used during the early 1990s to promote the use of condoms [John Oxley Library].
- 3: Promotional poster used by QuAC in 1993 to promote safer sexual practices [John Oxley Library].



ANNE PRYOR ... "I believe we must accept and love people the way they are."

Volunteers fight AIDS

By DRENA PARRINGTON

Mrs Anne Pryor, 72, is angry; angry at prejudice which she believes is contributing to the misery of AIDS sufferers.

Mrs Pryor, a Norwegian-born former nurse, is one of a small but effective group of women who are putting their time and skills to work to help the Queensland AIDS Committee (QAC) meet the needs of those who have contracted acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

As a volunteer telephone counsellor with Lifeline, Mrs Pryor became aware of those needs when she handled requests for information from a number of people who had, or suspected they had, AIDS.

"I answered the telephone on a number of occasions to frightened young people," she said. "I realised that I did not have sufficient information on AIDS to help them effectively, so early this year I decided to do a course run by the Queensland AIDS Committee."

(QAC runs AIDS information and telephone counselling courses every three months for members of the public.)

Following this, Mrs Pryor became a familiar figure at QAC House, answering telephones, counselling and lending an empathetic ear or shoulder when called upon.

"I don't do very much, you know," she said. "At first I thought my nursing training might be of help in caring for those young people who are dying from AIDS, but I am not as strong as I used to be. I

wrecked my back nursing, so instead I help out with the telephone counselling from time to time."

Mrs Pryor said the homosexuality of the majority of people seeking help from QAC did not bother her. The prejudice often displayed towards them did.

"I have often wondered why I feel the way I do, why I am so upset by attitudes of prejudice," Mrs Pryor said. "I have felt this way since long before AIDS became an issue."

'Left-handed'

"I think it stems from my school days. I was left-handed, and I cannot forget what I went through to learn to write with my right hand. I can still remember the mathematics teacher standing over me."

"I suppose I regard a homosexual as a left-handed person. People are born to something, and that's that. Although AIDS is not exclusively a homosexual disease, it is true that many of those affected now are homosexual."

"There appears to be an overwhelming number of well-meaning Christian people in our community who believe that, if they wanted to, homosexuals could become heterosexual overnight. I, too, am a Christian, and I believe we must accept and love people the way they are."

"With AIDS we have so many very young people facing a ghastly disease at a time in their lives when they should be thinking only of life. There is no room for prejudice in meeting this problem."

Mrs Pryor said the Queensland AIDS Committee was going to need increasing support from the community as greater numbers of people were affected by the disease.

"I admire the committee," she said. "It has problems because of a lack of money and resources. But the work cannot be allowed to peter out because things are going to get so very much worse."

In addition to telephone counselling with Lifeline and QAC, Mrs Pryor also visits inmates in Brisbane Prison.

She sees nothing remarkable in her volunteer work, and says simply that she has always had an interest in helping people, and goes where she is needed.

The president of QAC, Mr Bill Rutkin, said the efforts of Mrs Pryor and the other half dozen women who did voluntary work were greatly appreciated.

"There's one lady, for instance, who makes a great big pot of soup each week for volunteers who are caring for people who are dying of AIDS, and for the self-help group which meets weekly at QAC House," he said. "Of course this is of great practical benefit, but it's also a great boost just to have that sort of moral support."

World AIDS Day, December 1

Kindness is needed, says Ivor

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) sufferers need comfort and commitment, not rejection.

That's the view of Ivor Holmans, member of the Sunnybank and District Baptist Church and volunteer carer of AIDS patients.

Mr Holmans said the community should become more aware of the disease and its victims and face up to its responsibilities in caring for AIDS sufferers. He particularly encouraged churches to take up the cause.

"I realise that for many churches, the resources of their care and concern groups are already extended, but persons with AIDS, so often outcasts of our society, require the fullest in Christian love, care and concern," Mr Holmans said.

"In the past three years, the AIDS Council, for which I am a volunteer worker, has nursed more than 20 people with AIDS, in their own homes."

"Dying from AIDS frequently imposes added stigma and leaves the

person bereft of all family and social support."

Mr Holmans has counselled sufferers for two years and has worked with some infected people until their death.

"Australia has at least 1079 people with full-blown AIDS," he said.

"These people have to live with the fear that they are soon to die."

"Helping them often makes me feel drained, but I believe that God is helping me and without His help, I would not be able to do this."

Mr Holmans began working with AIDS sufferers because he felt society was neglecting them.

"People are shying away because of their ignorance," he said.

"You can't get AIDS by touching infected people, sharing their utensils or through mosquitoes. AIDS sufferers are alone and frightened. We need to give them all the help in the world, after



Ivor Holmans... working to help AIDS sufferers and to increase public awareness of the disease.

all, they are a part of community.

"The number of known cases is escalating so rapidly that within five years in Australia, every family will know someone who is infected."

"It's not enough to pray for people with AIDS. We must follow Christ's example by going right there in among it and doing something."

World AIDS Day will be held on December 1, with the Queensland

AIDS Council working to increase public awareness of the disease.

A candlelight vigil will be held in King George Square on the day to encourage people to feel compassion towards sufferers.

For more information about AIDS, contact the Queensland AIDS Council on 840 1990. The Council welcomes questions as it is trying to determine what the public wants to know about the disease.

Volunteers and Supporters

Right from the outset, volunteers have been central to the success and survival of the organisation that became QAHC. The initial office-bearers, including Brian Day, Peter North, Bill Rutkin and Malcolm McCamish, invested enormous amounts of voluntary time and energy into making QuAC succeed. Other people like Roger Sawkins, to mention just one name out of many, have supported the organisation for 25 years.

Apart from the officer bearers, community volunteers, including a number of People Living With HIV-AIDS, manned telephones, gave talks to Lifeline and Queensland health services. Members of the heterosexual community, including some women whose sons had been affected by HIV-AIDS, also gave time and energy to the organisation. There are numerous accounts of people doing what they could to assist – whether that involved bringing pots of soup into the QuAC headquarters or spending days and nights caring for and nursing people dying of AIDS related illnesses.

Peter North stresses the dedication of women such as Ann Coburn, Jill Rhodes and Marion Davies (who displayed an unrelenting commitment to the Quilt project), who kept supporting and putting in extraordinary efforts, despite their own grief and stress at the losses that they frequently faced.⁴² Robert Allender, who served on the Board as Vice President for many years, remembers the unique contribution of individuals such as Di Bird, John Boucher, Ian Byford (who



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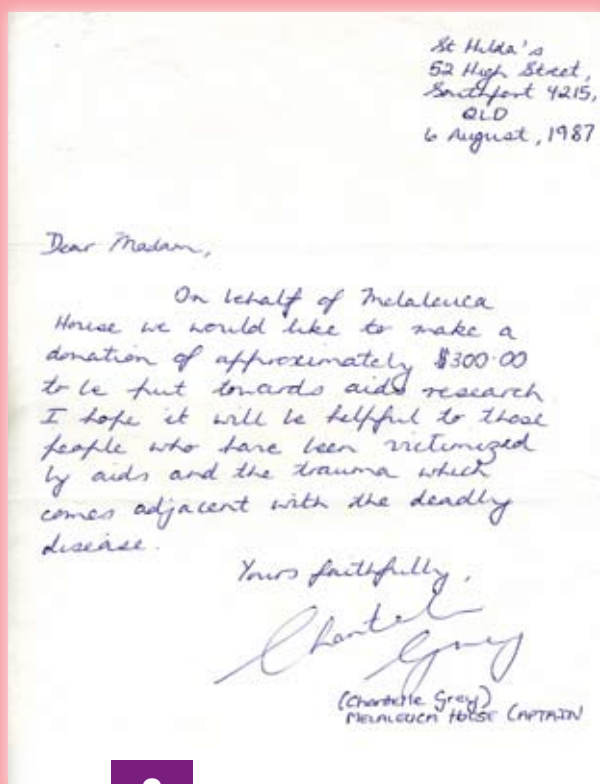


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- 1: As this 1986 article about Asse Pryor, a 72-year-old QuAC volunteer explains, QuAC volunteers were drawn from a diverse range of people. [Sunday Mail, 21 September 1986]
- 2: Many people volunteered their time to QuAC for a variety of reasons [Southern Star, 16 November 1988].
- 3: In the mid-1990s David Rowley and a team of volunteers made preparations for the Candlelight Vigil [QAHC Archives].
- 4: At Brisbane's 1999 Pride, QuAC volunteers, including Roy Starky, David Rowley and Shayne Wilde, raised awareness of QuAC's HIV services [QAHC Archives].
- 5: In 1996, Di Bird and Norman Harris were amongst QuAC volunteers staffing the QuAC tent at Pride [QAHC Archives].



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- 1: In 1996, QuAC volunteers participated in the Candlelight Vigil (QAHC Archives)
- 2: St Hilda's Girls School at Southport made a donation to QuAC in 1987, acknowledging the social prejudice that surrounded HIV-AIDS in that era (QAHC Archives).
- 3: From as early as 1985, QuAC volunteers were providing in-home care for seriously ill People Living With HIV-AIDS (Courier-Mail, 8 November 1985)
- 4: A 1987 donation from the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) (QAHC Archives).

provided massages), David Davenport, Barb Druckman, Peter Ferguson, Marian Falthorpe, Di Gillam, Jill Gore, Danny Malto (who cut hair), Joan Matson, Angela and David Moir and Carmel Tapelois.⁴³ Dr Peter Foote, although retired, was on 24-hour call, seven days a week, and helped enormously with pain relief and supervision of some of the finer points of nursing.⁴⁴

To this day, LGBT community members speak of former QuAC Presidents like Mike Kennedy, who worked for QuAC in the mid-1990s, spending days conducting vital organisational business and many evenings providing care to those suffering from HIV-AIDS. This work was far from easy as volunteers often grew very close to those they nursed and were confronted with much grief, sadness and loss.

The efforts of Cory Prickett and his team of young gay men (who were around sixteen years of age at the time) in producing the Duck News magazine for many years must also be acknowledged. This magazine played a vital role in informing QuAC workers and the broader community about safe sex, community events and many forms of important information.

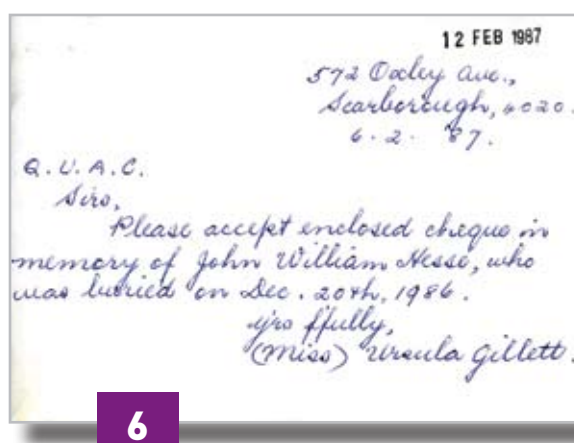
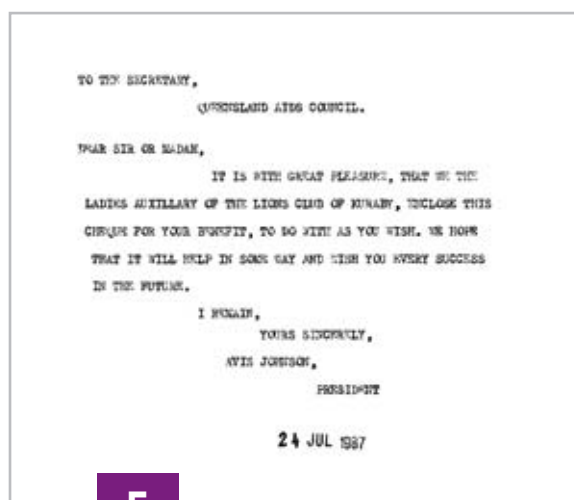
It is reasonable to say that QuAC simply would not have survived had it not been for the efforts of early volunteers and the efforts of staff members that vastly exceeded any expectations.

Today, QAHC is still highly dependent on the contributions of volunteers, who receive appropriate training and support. As the organisation itself noted in 2008:

Volunteers are active in a variety of areas including outreach, administration, staffing our resource centres, working on pride and film festivals and the Board. In addition to 'formal' volunteers, there are a large number of people who work with QAHC through various action and working groups and condom stuffing parties.⁴⁵

Efforts have been made to recognise the contribution of volunteers by introducing a President's Award for Volunteering and other volunteers receive a certificate of appreciation and are thanked at events in regional locations and Brisbane.

As QAHC is a registered charity, it is also crucial to acknowledge the contributions of the many Queenslanders who have donated money and in-kind support to the organisation since its inception. Without this support – which came from an enormous range of individuals and groups – QAHC would not be celebrating 25 years of existence.



5: The Ladies Auxiliary of the Kuraby Lions Club made a 1987 donation to QuAC (QAHC Archives)

6: Many donations to QuAC were made to remember loved ones (QAHC Archives).

The Queensland AIDS Committee Trust

There is no evidence that AIDS has been transmitted through sweat, or that it is spread through the air, in swimming pools or by mosquitoes.

Touching objects handled by persons with AIDS, sharing crockery or cutlery, spending time in the same house or room with them or the same workplace, eating in a restaurant or drinking in a bar frequented by possible AIDS carriers does not spread the disease.

The AIDS virus cannot be transmitted through donating or receiving blood or blood products.

For free, confidential information and/or support, please telephone:

TOWNSVILLE (077) 79 0321 or write P.O. Box 2106 Townsville 4810

BRISBANE (07) 854 1758 or write P.O. Box 1103, Fortitude Valley 4006

GOLD COAST (075) 50 1394 or write P.O. Box 1330 Surfers Paradise 4217

All donations over \$2.00 are tax deductible

Il comitato amministrativo del Queensland per A.I.D.S. (S.I.D.A.)

Non esiste nessuna evidenza che A.I.D.S. sia mai stato contratto o trasmesso del sudore, oppure che sia diffusa dell'aria, o nelle piscine, o dalle zanzare.

Neppure del toccare oggetti toccati da una persona afflitta dal A.I.D.S., né dal usare le stessi stoviglie, piatti o bicchieri, o nel abitare nella stessa casa o stanza, o nel lavorare insieme, o dal mangiare allo stesso ristorante o bere allo stesso bar frequentato da persone sofferenti di A.I.D.S. Questo non diffonde affatto la malattia.

Il virus del 'A.I.D.S.' non può essere trasmesso donando o ricevendo sangue o prodotti di sangue

Per gratuite ulteriori informazioni o aiuto si prega telefonare:

TOWNSVILLE (077) 79 0321 o scrivere P.O. Box 2106 Townsville 4810

BRISBANE (07) 854 1758 o scrivere P.O. Box 1103, Fortitude Valley 4006

GOLD COAST (075) 50 1394 o scrivere P.O. Box 1330 Surfers Paradise 4217

Donazioni superanti \$2.00 possono essere dedotte dalle tasse. E6087C

Cairns AIDS office opens

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CHANGING Cairns's "won't happen to me" attitude on AIDS is to be one of the first targets of the Queensland AIDS Council's first Cairns office.

The office, headed by the council's regional education officer, Mr Kerin O'Brien, began its first day of operation yesterday.

Mr O'Brien said he had encountered a widespread biased attitude towards AIDS in Cairns and the office's public education program hoped to change that.

"The two main functions of the office will be to educate the public on AIDS and train home care officers for antibody-positive patients in Cairns," he said.

He said the home care officers would help AIDS patients to stay out of hospital as long as possible, thereby saving the sufferers' money.

He said the council would also offer counselling services.

The office, on Abbott St, would be manned from 10 am to 4 pm, Monday to Friday on the phone number 51 1028.

Mr O'Brien said he was still in the process of setting up the office. He said people could ring the office 24 hours a day, with the phone being switched through to a counsellor after hours.



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Representing Regions

In November/December of 1988, an editorial in Duck News, the official publication of QuAC, noted that:

*It's easy to think of QuAC as just what is happening in Brisbane. But, after all, we are the Queensland AIDS Council, not Brisbane or Townsville or anywhere else AIDS Councils. We are each of us parts of a community bound by our dedication, our caring, our loss, our hope. The AIDS virus is not a respecter of boundaries of city limits and it is so appropriate and inevitable that regional branches establish themselves, particularly in a large and decentralised state such as Queensland.*⁴⁶

This emphasis on the different needs of different parts of Queensland has been a feature of QAHC right from the outset. Geographically and culturally, Queensland is a diverse state and members of the LGBT community in various regions have different needs and contend with different pressures.

As soon as funding allowed, staff positions were established in Cairns, the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast. A volunteer presence was maintained in Toowoomba for a brief period. In many ways, QuAC led the rest of Australia by establishing bases outside of Queensland's capital city.

The differences between life in major population centres and more rural

bases was made clear at several points in the organisation's history. In 1988, Michael Carden, a dedicated and highly effective AIDS Council worker was bashed in a violent, homophobic incident in Townsville. Michael bravely spoke out about this incident and drew attention to the pressures that impacted on the gay and lesbian community in this area.⁴⁷ Unfortunately, the Townsville office of QuAC was also bombed in 1999, causing minor injuries to one employee. It seems though that this attack was not directly motivated by homophobia, though it certainly caused great stress and upheaval to staff and the community using that base.

Today, QAHC maintains its regional focus. Resource Centres operating in Cairns, Maroochydore and Brisbane continue to be very popular with members of the LGBT community. QAHC also makes a significant effort to promote festivals and cultural events that occur outside of Brisbane in places like Toowoomba and the Gold Coast. As former QuAC President Alan Hough has declared, "QAHC is so incredibly important in terms of promoting a sense of community in Queensland's regions."⁴⁸

Volunteers from the regions continue to make a substantial contribution to QAHC and these efforts do much to promote LGBT health and welfare in these regions.

1: In 1986, QuAC ran advertisements in north Queensland newspapers in both English and Italian (QAHC Archives).

2: In 1988, the Cairns QuAC office opened in Grafton Street (Cairns Post, 15 March 1988).

3: The Yarning Up programme that ran in 2004 and aimed to address the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in Cairns proved to be a successful collaboration (QAHC Archives).

4: Festivals sponsored by QAHC have played an important role in community building. This photo shows members of the community enjoying the QAHC sponsored Sunshine Coast Film Festival in 2007 (QAHC Archives).



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1: The significant outreach efforts towards the Indigenous LGBT community in 2003 proved very productive (QAHC Archives).

2: A 2007 event at Brisbane Pride called "You say Gender – we say queer" aimed to raise awareness of trans issues and trans resource needs (QAHC Archives).

3: In the 1990s, QuAC supported youth group Toehold to play a vital role in supporting younger members of the LGBT community (John Oxley Library).

Representing Diversity

Throughout QAHC's history, lesbians, bisexual people, transgender people and gay men have worked together in a variety of roles. Today QAHC is an organisation that aims to promote positive health and welfare outcomes for all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. QAHC is aware that the LGBT community is a diverse one and that different parts of the community have varying needs.

Early efforts to address the broader health of the LGBT community saw QuAC establish the Gladstone Road Medical Centre, which later became independent.

The health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the community has been a priority since QAHC's early years. By 1987, major outreach efforts had been made to Indigenous men living on Palm Island and QAHC has tried to build on these efforts.

Former President Alan Hough, who was active with QAHC in the 1990s, spoke of the innovative development of Indigenous outreach and educational programmes in this period as one of the achievements he was most proud of.⁴⁹

QAHC continues to work closely with Indigenous Sista-girls and gay men about appropriate outreach programmes. In the 2007-2008 financial year, this consultation saw the launch of, '2 Spirits', a revitalised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program, which includes peer support.⁵⁰

QAHC has also attempted to work with the transgender community to offer support and inclusion in a form this community needs. In 1990, QAHC

management provided support to Kerri [Linda] Petrie when she created the Australian Transsexual Support Group of Queensland.

The Toehold programme, which was at one stage convened by current QAHC General Manager Paul Martin, has supported the specific needs of younger members of the LGBT community in the past.

More recently, QAHC has devoted considerable attention to the needs of ageing members of the LGBT community by forming an Ageing Action Group. QAHC has run information seminars addressing changes to the Federal social security system, as well as addressing other issues that directly impact on older members of the LGBT community.

Although the only ongoing government funding QAHC receives is for HIV prevention work with gay men, QAHC is currently addressing matters such as homophobia, drug and alcohol and mental health issues. A major campaign exploring higher rates of lesbian breast cancer has also been launched.



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3: National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) - Qld AIDS Council Indigenous Project stall 2003

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I'M HIV+
AND I'M OUT
TONIGHT
FEELING
GREAT!

Queensland Positive People - Leading the Response



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- 1: Although Queensland Positive People has assumed more autonomy as its capacity developed, QuAC assisted in the production of poster resources and practical support in the 1990s and still works collaboratively with this organisation when appropriate (John Oxley Library).
- 2: In 1994, John Bonello, QuAC's Education Officer in Townsville, spoke publicly for the first time as Person Living with HIV-AIDS (QAHC Archives).

Working Together: The contribution made by People Living With HIV-AIDS

Right from the outset, QuAC worked with and depended on a close relationship with those who were living with HIV-AIDS. While many diagnosed in the early stages of the epidemic bravely spoke out publicly and acknowledged the support QuAC provided them, many of QuAC's staff were also inspired by the courage displayed by those who were living with HIV-AIDS.

In February of 1986, staff and volunteers experienced the first death of a client and friend. This man had been forced to leave his rental accommodation when his landlord became aware of his positive status. He then moved into the backroom of the Queensland AIDS Council office in Spring Hill, where volunteers cared for him.

While volunteers experienced much sadness and grief, they were also inspired by the bravery they saw. Ann Coburn, who served as volunteer co-ordinator and on the QuAC executive, wrote in 1990 that:

Above all, I see courage in those living with HIV/AIDS. Not the bleak courage of 'no choice'; this is the positive courage of going on, continuing to work, to play, to love, to assist others, to educate the wider public, most of all to laugh, black humour though it may be sometimes.⁵¹

On this note, one man living with HIV, wrote to Duck News, describing how he had gone through all "the stages of denial, anger and bargaining" after his diagnosis but "what helped me then was the support and love from my friends and the Queensland AIDS Council staff. He spoke of feeling empowered and vowed

that "I am NOT going to be thwarted by a medical diagnosis."⁵²

There are many stories documenting the bravery of those diagnosed with HIV-AIDS in Queensland's past. In 1985, the Daily Sun newspaper wrote of Joe, a PLWHA, who volunteered with QuAC. When Joe was involved in a motor cycle accident he displayed great courage by using his last amount of strength to tell ambulance officials to take appropriate precautions as he had been diagnosed with HIV-AIDS.

Another PLWHA, Ken, volunteered as a counsellor with QuAC in 1985. He told the Courier Mail that he was getting valuable support from the organisation, felt he was playing a supportive role to others and was, in turn, receiving friendship and feeling less isolated.

QuAC offered immediate social and practical support to many people diagnosed with HIV-AIDS in an era when there was still much ignorance and prejudice about this epidemic. In the early stages of QuAC's operations, some volunteers housed PLWHA who had nowhere to live and tried to provide as much practical support as necessary.

Today, QAHC still maintains an important collaborative relationship with Queensland Positive People, which became Queensland's peer support agency for PLWHA in 1988.

Although the medical treatment of PLWHA has changed significantly since QAHC was founded, QAHC still places a pivotal priority on supporting people affected by HIV-AIDS and on educating the broader community about HIV-AIDS.

Red tape tears for hero's dad

THE father of Brisbane's AIDS hero — the motorcyclist who warned ambulancemen of his disease with his dying breath — yesterday faced a heart-breaking battle to bury his son.

The father found himself in a muddle of red tape and has been told by health authorities he may even have to get a special lead-lined coffin made for his son's body.

"The coroner tells me I might have to get a special coffin to move my son," said the man, who asked not to be named, after he arrived in Brisbane from Adelaide.

"Do they think the germs are going to jump out?"

"My son is dead, the antibodies are dead. Isn't that enough?"

"I wish people would understand there is a big difference between contagious and transmittable."

A Health Department spokesman yesterday said morgues could demand certain requirements be met before a body was officially released and it was up to relatives to sort it out and comply.

Queensland AIDS Committee president Mr Bill

By

LINDY ROWETT

Rutkin said the Health Department had not set down specific guidelines for the handling of AIDS victims' bodies.

"Hopefully, sanity will prevail," Mr Rutkin said.

The father said his son had come to Queensland three months ago to start a new life after beating a heroin addiction.

He had picked up AIDS by using dirty hypodermic needles.

He died on Monday after falling from his motorcycle and under a bus, but not before he warned ambulance bearers and police he was an AIDS victim.

His father said his son

● Cont Page 4



Accident scene where AIDS sufferer was killed.



3: In 1985, Brisbane newspapers carried the story of Joe, a HIV Positive QuAC volunteer who died a hero. (Daily Sun, 1 October 1985).

4: In 1985, Ken, a QuAC volunteer Living With HIV-AIDS, drew public attention to many of the issues and prejudices he experienced from the broader community. (Greg Weir Collection)

Conclusion

There is much sadness attached to the history of QAHC. Many young and promising lives, as well as older and wiser lives were lost to the HIV-AIDS epidemic. Many other lives continue to be affected by the epidemic and those who they lost.

There is also a great deal of courage and pride that is attached to QAHC's history. The strength that has been shown by People Living With HIV-AIDS in this state has been - and continues to be - incredible. It must also be noted that while Queensland's state government did little in the early days to assist those who needed help, very different sections of the LGBT community came together to provide support and assistance to those who required it. Moreover, the LGBT community made it a priority to educate and inform others about the epidemic. There were also heterosexual allies who assisted. There are many truly heroic stories from QAHC's past.

QAHC's history also provides much reason for optimism. The organisation has shifted and evolved over time in tandem with the LGBT community. Its focus now incorporates new areas of LGBT health – along with the traditional emphasis on HIV-AIDS prevention and education.

Over the past twenty-five years, much has changed in Queensland. One thing, however, has not. The organisation that is now QAHC has helped to support many, to create and inspire others and to play a leading role in the LGBT community. The future looks bright!

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