

Sector Release

3 September 2021

Community resource published to support women living with HIV in Australia on breastfeeding options is released in conjunction with new clinical guidance



The [National Association of People with HIV Australia](#) (NAPWHA) — in shared collaboration with [Positive Women Victoria](#), is pleased to publish a new community resource entitled [Breastfeeding for women living with HIV In Australia](#).

"The information in this community resource is provided for women who are living with HIV — who are pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant," says Heather Ellis, Communications Officer for Positive Women Victoria, who is also one of the co-editors of the community resource.

To the reader she states, "You may be thinking about breastfeeding your baby, and whether it is safe or advisable. This community resource aims to assist with understanding the issues around breastfeeding or formula feeding."

Heather Ellis, who will represent as part of a panel at the [ASHM 2021 Virtual Conference on 8 September 2021](#) continues, "We hope after reading this information, women will feel encouraged by the news that although medical and health experts agree that formula feeding is still the safest option, breastfeeding is increasingly being recognised as an option that may be open to some women living with HIV."

This community resource will also be released alongside an exciting issue of new guidance for healthcare providers with regard to the infant feeding options available to people living with HIV in Australia. Published by the [Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine](#) (ASHM) — the peak national organisation representing the clinical HIV workforce, the clinical guidance document [The Optimal Scenario and Context of Care](#), will feature some highlighted sections from the community resource.

Of this clinical guidance to be launched at the [ASHM 2021 Virtual Conference](#), Chair of Femfatales Kath Leane, HIV positive woman and mother of 34 years, offers her endorsement. "This guide offers balanced information that will not only empower and support women to safely consider their options but helps remove that stigma and guilt."

In 2017, [Femfatales](#) (NAPWHA National Network of Women Living with HIV) tendered a submission to the ASHM of a [Review of ASHM Antiretroviral Guidelines – US DHHS Guidelines with Australian Commentary: HIV-Infected Women](#) with regards to postpartum management and infant feeding. The review identified important gaps that existed in the evidence-base and information about the risks and benefits.

[Breastfeeding for women living with HIV In Australia](#) was an initiative which then continued to build upon and respond to this evidence-base, developed and produced under the [NAPWHA HIV Health Literacy Framework project](#).

"This NAPWHA framework adopts an approach where community-led participatory action research underpins all of the health literacy initiatives produced," explains Sarah Feagan, one of Community Advocates of the NAPWHA project.

"The meaningful involvement of women living with HIV/AIDS (MIWA) is a key feature of women-centred HIV care. It was imperative that the development of this community resource was led by HIV community advocates, and that it was then further informed by networks of HIV peers through a consultative process. This ensures that the development of any health promotion is culturally appropriate and tailored for women."

The [NAPWHA Health Literacy Framework project](#) (2019-2021) was made possible through the funding support of Viiv Healthcare Australia.

NAPWHA and Positive Women Victoria encourage community members to use information contained in the community resource [Breastfeeding for women living with HIV In Australia](#) to start a discussion with your doctor or health care team.

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