



Good morning – and on behalf of NAPWHA and people living with HIV throughout Australia, welcome to the 2022 Australasian HIV and AIDS Conference.

Thank you for being here and for showing your commitment to improving our lives through better treatment and care.

You need to know that you're appreciated ... because ... Let's face it ... We're all a bit tired.

It has been a rough couple of years ... and just when we thought we were pulling through Another obstacle raises its ugly head.

I am talking, of course, about Monkeypox.

A scourge which has the potential to delay our progress out of the stigma sinkhole we're all trying so hard to pull ourselves out of.

To this end I suggest that we abide by the adage: keep calm and carry on.

If there's one thing that HIV has taught us ... and COVID has confirmed it ... we are a resilient bunch. And a determined one. As a body positive, we will take Monkeypox in our stride.

That said, we still must be vigilant not to let it diminish our combined efforts to overcome HIV stigma, and to raise the quality of life of every person living with HIV in Australia by 2030.

Quality of Life, as many of you know, is now a target in the National HIV strategy.

The strategy defined three targets intended to reduce the number of new HIV diagnoses each year.

Recognising that people with suppressed 'viral load' cannot sexually transmit the virus, the strategy targets 95% of people with HIV knowing their status, commencing timely treatment, and reaching suppressed viral load. This is part of an audacious plan to end HIV as a threat to public health by 2030.

Having good HIV care and achieving a low viral load do not guarantee that a person with HIV will have a good quality of life. And we cannot end the HIV epidemic without addressing and undoing its lingering impact on personal health and wellbeing.

We want the national HIV strategy to target 95% of people with HIV achieving good quality of life by 2030. We propose using a broader range of PozQol survey data, collected from many settings, to monitor whether people with HIV are experiencing improvements in their quality of life over time.

One study, Positive Perspectives 2, found Australia leads the world in satisfaction with HIV care, with 83% of Australian respondents being happy with their HIV care. But only 64% reported being in optimal health overall.

In response, NAPWHA undertook a series of community engagement events to build an understanding of how people with HIV in Australia define good quality of life.

The end result is an Australian Community Accord on Quality of Life for People with HIV, which is both a commitment and a call-to-action for the partners in the Australian HIV response

The Accord defines a framework for identifying and addressing the drivers of self-perceived quality of life in people with HIV. It complements validated standardised measures such as PozQOL and the WHOQOL-HIV scales.

Doctors, Nurses, all Service providers ... I encourage you to work in partnership with HIV peer support workers and community organisations to help address the drivers of quality of life for people with HIV.

We have shown that meeting targets is achievable.

Let us now focus on quality of life.

Thank you for your commitment to us, and I hope you have an enjoyable and fruitful conference experience.