

## VAC mourns the loss of longstanding HIV community champion Tony Maynard

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

8 March 2018 - Today, the Victorian AIDS Council (VAC) has lost a longstanding and dedicated champion in the response to HIV and AIDS with the passing of Tony Maynard. Serving on the current VAC board, Tony's longstanding commitment to addressing HIV in Australia goes back over 30 years — as does his involvement with VAC. Tony served at VAC's first Treatments Officer during the height of the epidemic.

Tony was passionate about ensuring no one was left behind in the HIV response and that everyone could access the treatment, care and support they needed. Tony served at the Senior Education Officer at the Australasian Society for HIV Medicine (ASHM). He worked with ACON in the Enhanced Primary Care Project as well as with the National Association of People with HIV Australia (NAPWHA) as their Treataware Project Officer. He also worked together with pharmaceutical companies to help bring vital HIV drugs to market in Australia.

With an established focus on HIV treatment throughout his career, Tony was excited to join the VAC board at a time when biomedical prevention's role in ending HIV was being fully realised with the introduction of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and the impact of an undetectable viral load in people living with HIV.

In the 1990s, Tony's work in the PLWHA program when deaths from AIDS were a weekly, sometimes daily, occurrence was characterised by sensitivity, care, generosity of spirit and genuine regard for the clients — many of whom were friends of Tony's from the community. He could often be seen sharing a meal or a coffee with clients, talking through treatment options and encouraging people to never give up hope - often in the face of seriously debilitating illness and the tragic reality of facing death. For his own part, he never allowed the toll of the epidemic to show, always cheerful with a wicked sense of humour he was always ready with a smile and a welcome, no matter how difficult the circumstances or the issues he was facing with his clients and friends.

Looking back on his career, a colleague recounted how Tony assisted a young HIV positive couple to access vertical transmission prophylaxis, prior to the publication of the landmark study, so that they had a healthy, HIV negative baby. In a world before the internet, knowing that this information was out there before publication was truly remarkable. Tony was incredibly knowledgeable and he genuinely cared about people.

"Today, we lost piece of our history and our legacy," said VAC CEO Simon Ruth. "As a community-led organisation, we are indebted to LGBTI community elders like Tony who have stayed with us — from our formation in response to HIV through to our current battles to ensuring the ongoing health and wellbeing of our LGBTI communities."

VAC President Chad Hughes added, "Tony brought a wealth of experience and wisdom to VAC. His legacy is woven into the fabric of so many of the organisations that played a vital role in the Australian response to HIV and AIDS. We will miss his unwavering dedication but will feel the impact of his valuable contribution in perpetuity."

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