

HIV and AIDS sector mourns the loss of activist and visionary leader Levinia Crooks

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

16 OCTOBER 2017 - Tireless HIV/AIDS activist, researcher, mentor and visionary, Levinia Crooks died in Sydney on Sunday evening after a long battle with illness.

Levinia's work in HIV/AIDS has spanned the epidemic in this country. Levinia was the first Executive Officer for the National Association of People Living with AIDS (NAPWA, later to become NAPWHA) and she was the President of the AIDS Council of New South Wales (ACON) from 1988 – 1989 and 1991 – 1992. Levinia was also instrumental in the work of the Bobby Goldsmith Foundation (BGF), one of Australia's longest running HIV and AIDS charities. Typical of her no nonsense, practical approach to issues, she has spoken on the need for such a charity in the early days of the epidemic, "In an environment like that you have to act. It is wrong that you have to act, it is wrong that you have to establish a parallel process. But there is a period of time in which you do have to do that." BGF continues its important work to this day.

For the last 18 years Levinia held the position of Chief Executive Officer of the Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM). During her tenure Levinia elevated the profile and breadth of ASHM through her professionalism, research insight and overall vision of the role the organisation would play both nationally and in the region.

"It is probably difficult to think of another person who has had the kind of influence that Levinia has had over the course of the last three decades of the epidemic," said Chad Hughes, VAC President.

"Her career began at a time when there was little hope for people living with HIV and she was instrumental, not only in the areas of care and support for people living with HIV and AIDS but at important moments in prevention such as her role in the drafting of national guidelines for the provision of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)."

"Levinia's commitment to the work of HIV and AIDS activism ranged from her roles in community based organisations, direct contact and care for people living with HIV and AIDS to high level collaboration with researchers, politicians and policy makers to advance HIV medicine in this country and the care and support of people living with the virus," said Simon Ruth, VAC CEO.

"The range of Levinia's research interests is formidable. She contributed to work on counselling, service capacity, combination therapy, health promotion and HIV and the law," added Chad Hughes.

"At every level, her contribution furthered debate in substantive and important ways. Her leadership legacy is one of partnership, collaboration, vision and courage and in many ways she will be impossible to replace."

ENDS

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