

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Melbourne, Australia

Seven HIV positive women to feature on the ‘Big Screen’ at Federation Square for World AIDS Day

Friday 1 December 2023, Melbourne Australia: Community organisation Positive Women Victoria, with support from ViiV Healthcare Australia, is lighting up Melbourne’s iconic Federation Square for World AIDS Day 2023 (Friday 1 December) to challenge stigma and educate the public on the experiences of women living with HIV and the impact of effective HIV management.

Thriving highlights the experiences of women living with HIV, sheds light on the stigma they face and shares important global health messages around Undetectable = Untransmittable, more commonly known as U=U, which means that people who achieve and maintain an undetectable viral load, cannot transmit HIV sexually to HIV-negative partners.¹

Over the course of a year, Positive Women Victoria, Melbourne based performance poet Fleassy Malay, videographer Ryan Lee Adams and ViiV Healthcare Australia worked together with seven women living with HIV to develop a performance poem – *Thriving*. The performance will be shared publicly for the first time, on the big screens at Federation Square in Melbourne during a lunchtime takeover on Friday 1 December.

Chrissie, a woman living with HIV, took part in *Thriving* to share her story, and empower women living with HIV so they do not let the stigma attached to the disease, suppress their potential to live rich lives.

"We don't have to live under the shadow of pain and stigma. Being part of this project allowed me to have my voice heard. I hope that by shining a light on underrepresented voices in our community we can empower all people living with HIV to be proud and live their lives vibrantly," Chrissie says.

Thriving highlights the experiences of women living with HIV, sheds light on the stigma they face and shares important global health messages around U=U, encouraging people to expand their HIV literacy.

Kirsty Machon, Executive Officer of Positive Women Victoria, says that it is crucial to share messages about advances in the space as it helps to challenge the engrained societal stigma that surrounds HIV.

"Thriving was created by women living with HIV, but the message is for everyone," Machon says.

"It shares knowledge that will reduce the stigma associated with HIV."

Globally there are an estimated 20.2 million women and girls living with HIV and they make up 12% of our local HIV population.^{2,3} However, their experiences are still widely underreported compared to others in the community.⁴

Ann Maccarrone, Community Engagement and Partnerships Manager at ViiV Healthcare Australia, believes that by raising awareness of the experiences of women living with HIV and increasing HIV understanding in the general population, we can help all people living with HIV thrive.

"We are proud to support Positive Women Victoria with such an important project that we hope will empower all women living with HIV to live their lives boldly and proudly. Creating greater visibility of

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the diverse experiences within the HIV community and increasing HIV literacy has the potential to reduce stigma and improve quality of life for the community,” says Ann.

“At ViiV Healthcare Australia, we believe that all people living with HIV are entitled to a thriving quality of life. On World AIDS Day and beyond, we are proud to support community organisations who are leading the way in providing crucial support to people living with HIV in Australia,” said Maccarrone.

Thriving will premiere at Federation Square, Melbourne on Friday, 1 December at 12:30 PM AEDT where the four-minute film will run on a loop until 1:00 PM AEDT. It will also be screened at a number of World AIDS Day events across New South Wales, the Northern Territory, South Australia and Victoria and internationally in South Africa, Cameroon, Thailand, Fiji, India and the United States.

The project was a collaboration between the seven women living with HIV, Melbourne-based performance poet Fleassy Malay and filmmaker Ryan Lee Adams. It was produced by [Positive Women Victoria](#), Australia’s only community support and advocacy organisation for women living with HIV, and was supported through a grant from [ViiV Healthcare Australia](#).

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About ViiV Healthcare

ViiV Healthcare is a global specialist HIV company established in November 2009 by GlaxoSmithKline (LSE: GSK) and Pfizer (NYSE: PFE) dedicated to delivering advances in treatment and care for people living with HIV and for people who are at risk of becoming infected with HIV. Shionogi joined in October 2012. The company’s aims are to take a deeper and broader interest in HIV/AIDS than any company has done before and take a new approach to deliver innovative medicines for HIV, as well as support communities affected by HIV. For more information on the company, its management, portfolio, pipeline, and commitment, please visit www.viivhealthcare.com.au

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