

**BGF LUNCH AND CO-PATRON ANNOUNCEMENT**

**BAR PATRON  
2 PHILLIP STREET**

**ITA BUTTROSE AC, OBE  
CO-PATRON BOBBY GOLDSMITH FOUNDATION**

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**THANK YOU, MICHAEL – I AM DELIGHTED TO ACCEPT THE ROLE OF CO-PATRON OF THE BOBBY GOLDSMITH FOUNDATION AND SHARE OUR JOINT RESPONSIBILITIES OF GUIDING BGF INTO THE FUTURE.**

**OUR THANKS TO STATE STREET FOR SPONSORING TODAY’S LUNCH AND GIVING US THE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK ABOUT THE WORK OF THE FOUNDATION.**

**I’VE HAD A LONG ASSOCIATION WITH BGF.**

**THE BOBBY GOLDSMITH FOUNDATION WAS CREATED IN 1984, THE SAME YEAR I ACCEPTED THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF A NEW COMMITTEE SET UP BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT – THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON AIDS – NACAIDS.**

**NOT LONG ATERWARDS NACAIDS BRIEFED BGF AND OTHER COMMUNITY GROUPS ON THE NATIONAL HIV EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR EVERYONE IN THE AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY, THAT WE HAD BEEN ASKED TO DO. IT WAS THE BEGINNING OF MY CONNECTION WITH THE FOUNDATION AND IT’S A RELATIONSHIP I VALUE GREATLY.**

**HOW DIFFERENT THE HIV/AIDS ENVIRONMENT WAS IN 1984 TO WHAT IT IS TODAY.**

**WE NOT ONLY HAD NO CURE AND NO VACCINE – AND WE STILL DON'T – BUT THERE WAS NO OR VERY LITTLE EFFECTIVE TREATMENT EITHER, WHICH MEANT MANY PEOPLE WHO CONTRACTED HIV COULD DO NOTHING TO PREVENT RAPID PROGRESSION TO AIDS AND TO AN OFTEN EARLY DEATH – AS HAPPENED WITH BOBBY GOLDSMITH HIMSELF.**

**BOBBY WAS ONE OF THE FIRST AUSTRALIANS TO DIE FROM AN AIDS-RELATED ILLNESS IN JUNE 1984. IN THE EARLY YEARS PEOPLE WHO DIED FROM AIDS WERE SHUNNED, EVEN BY MANY IN THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.**

**BOBBY'S FRIENDS WERE DETERMINED TO PROVIDE THE CARE HE NEEDED TO REMAIN AT HOME AND TO MAKE HIS LAST WEEKS AS COMFORTABLE AS POSSIBLE. HE DIED, WITH DIGNITY, AT HOME WHERE HE WANTED TO BE.**

**NACAIDS ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD AND PROMOTED THE NEED FOR PEOPLE WITH HIV TO BE SUPPORTED, THE NEED MANY HAD FOR PASTORAL CARE, THE NEED THEY HAD FOR BEING HUGGED AND TOUCHED, AND THE IMPORTANCE, AS EXEMPLIFIED BY BGF, FOR PEOPLE TO DIE WITH DIGNITY, PREFERABLY IN THEIR OWN HOME.**

**HOW DID I GET INVOLVED? I WAS EDITOR-IN CHIEF OF THE DAILY & SUNDAY TELEGRAPHS WHEN FEDERAL HEALTH MINISTER NEAL BLEWETT RANG ME LATE ONE NIGHT. I THOUGHT HE HAD A STORY FOR ONE OF MY PAPERS. NOT FOR A MOMENT DID IT OCCUR TO ME THAT I WAS GOING TO BE THE STORY.**

**IN ACCEPTING THE ROLE OF CHAIRING NACAIDS – I HAD NO IDEA OF THE ENORMITY OF THE PROJECT I'D AGREED TO UNDERTAKE...AT FIRST. I REMEMBER NEAL BLEWETT TELLING ME THAT WHEN HE TOOK OVER THE FEDERAL HEALTH PORTFOLIO IN 1983, HE CAME ACROSS A FILE NOTE THAT SAID SOMETHING LIKE – “AND OH YES – THERE IS A VIRUS CALLED AIDS. IT SEEMS TO AFFECT GAY MEN.”**

**IN THOSE DAYS, FEW PEOPLE HAD ANY IDEA THAT AIDS WOULD BECOME THE GREATEST PUBLIC HEALTH THREAT OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY. EVEN WHO – THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION – ADMITTED THAT IT MISUNDERSTOOD THE MAGNITUDE OF THE DISEASE.**

**AND AT THIS STAGE OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY, WITH ALMOST 40 MILLION PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV GLOBALLY – WE CURRENTLY HAVE 30,000 CASES IN AUSTRALIA – NO DOUBT ITS IMPACT ON THIS CENTURY WILL ALSO BE CONSIDERABLE.**

**BACK IN THE 80s THE QUESTION OF LONGEVITY FOR SOMEONE LIVING WITH HIV WAS NEVER DISCUSSED...FOR ONE MOMENT. BUT WITH THE ARRIVAL OF ANTI-RETROVIRAL THERAPY (ART) THE PROGNOSIS FOR PEOPLE WITH HIV CHANGED. OVER THE YEARS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ART HAS EVOLVED, WITH SIDE EFFECTS REDUCED, WHILE INCREASING THE QUALITY AND LIFE EXPECTANCY FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV.**

**HIV-POSITIVE MEN AND WOMEN ARE GROWING OLD IN NUMBERS THAT WEREN'T ANTICIPATED BACK IN THE 1980s. BUT EVEN THOUGH HIV HAS GONE FROM A DEVASTATING EPIDEMIC TO A MANAGEABLE CHRONIC DISEASE, STIGMA AROUND HIV IS STILL PREVALENT. LGBTQIA+ PEOPLE HAVE STRUGGLED ALL THEIR LIVES AND NOW IN THEIR OLDER YEARS ARE AT THEIR MOST VULNERABLE.**

**BGF CEO NICK LAWSON TELLS ME THEIR BIGGEST CONCERN ABOUT GROWING OLDER AND AGED CARE, IS HOW ARE THEY GOING TO BE TREATED; WILL THEY BE RESPECTED.**

**JUST LIKE OTHER OLDER AUSTRALIANS, MANY OLDER PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV, HAVE OTHER CHRONIC CONDITIONS.**

**HOWEVER, AUSTRALIA'S AGED CARE SERVICES ARE UNDER ENORMOUS STRAIN TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE NUMBERS OF AUSTRALIANS WHO REQUIRE THEIR ASSISTANCE – AS I'M SURE YOU ARE ALL AWARE. THERE IS A SERIOUS SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED CARERS IN AGED CARE THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA.**

**STIGMA AND FEAR OF HIV WILL BE CONFRONTING FOR PEOPLE WORKING IN THE AGED CARE AREA, MANY OF WHOM WON'T HAVE ANY EXPERIENCE IN CARING FOR PEOPLE WITH HIV. I DOUBT THEY WILL KNOW MUCH ABOUT THE HIV VIRUS EITHER.**

**IT'S IMPORTANT THAT PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV KNOW THAT THEY ARE NOT ALONE – THAT AN ORGANISATION LIKE BGF CARES ABOUT THE STRUGGLES THEY SOMETIMES FACE AND HOW THOSE STRUGGLES IMPACT ON THEIR LIVES PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY.**

**BGF PROVIDES PRACTICAL, EMOTIONAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV WHO COME FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE. FROM DIAGNOSIS ONWARDS, THEY WORK WITH THEIR CLIENTS TO LIMIT THE CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES OF SOCIAL ISOLATION, ECONOMIC POVERTY AND STIGMA.**

**BGF ACCEPTS THAT IT MUST ADAPT AND RESPOND TO THE WIDELY DIVERGENT NEEDS OF ITS CLIENTS AS THEY NAVIGATE THE SOCIAL, PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL IMPACTS OF HIV.**

**TO DO THIS EFFECTIVELY, BGF IS BRANCHING OUT INTO THE AGEING AND DISABILITY SERVICE AREA FOR THE BROADER LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY. IT WILL EXPAND ITS COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAM ENABLING IT TO DELIVER BROKERED CARE AND DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES THROUGH THE NDIS TO PEOPLE IN THEIR HOMES, ALLOWING THEM TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY, WITH SELF-RESPECT.**

**BOBBY GOLDSMITH LEFT A PRECIOUS LEGACY – THROUGH BOBBY AND HIS FRIENDS, WHO GOT TOGETHER TO GIVE LOVE AND SUPPORT, CAME THE UNDERSTANDING THAT ALL PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV NEEDED LOVE AS WELL AS HELP AND CARE.**

**BGF'S GOAL IS TO KEEP THIS LEGACY ALIVE AND I'M SURE I CAN SPEAK FOR MICHAEL WHEN I SAY WE ARE BOTH COMMITTED TO HELPING THEM DO EXACTLY THAT.**

**THANK YOU.**