

Report for the Department of Human Services, Victoria

**The contemporary context of HIV infection
in Victoria, Australia**

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infection, to the satisfaction of both them and interviewer. They were then asked for a detailed description of those events. These accounts are reconstructions of risk encounters that attempt to make sense of the experience. If the explanation seemed implausible to the interviewer, s/he would probe further and negotiate with the participant until a more likely event was identified. Agreement was reached in the vast majority of cases. In many of the interviews this process of negotiation reveals much about the different meanings of HIV risk as well as the value that participants attached to certain narratives over others. Even the implausible explanations are rich in this regard. Thus the accounts are important both for what they reveal about the meanings and understandings of risk for participants and for what they reveal about the actual ways they contracted HIV. On average interviews lasted 1 ½ hours, generating transcripts of up to 80 pages.

Transcribed data were analysed using an interpretive thematic approach (Ritchie & Lewis 2003). Transcripts were each read at least twice and initial themes were identified that arose from the narratives. Transcripts were then coded using the NVIVO software package and further themes were identified, compared across interviews and refined. This report discusses the major themes that arose in the interviews. These are not necessarily representative of the entire sample and may have only arisen in some interviews. They are discussed here because they are salient in relation to gay men's sexual practice and HIV more broadly.

Findings

The average age of participants at the time of interview was 36 years. This is broadly consistent with epidemiological data that suggests the average age of gay men at time of HIV infection is 37 (NCHECR, 2005). The youngest participant was 24 years old and the oldest 54 years old. Eight participants were from Anglo-Australian backgrounds and three were from

