

# DEVELOPING A CAMPAIGN TO ENCOURAGE ABORIGINAL GAY MEN TO ACCESS HIV RAPID TESTING

AUTHOR: B. MACKIE, ACON

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AND POPULATION PROGRAMS | BMACKIE@ACON.ORG.AU | 02 9206 2000 | 414 ELIZABETH ST, SURRY HILLS NSW 2010 | WWW.ACON.ORG.AU

## INTRODUCTION

In 2012, ACON commenced planning to develop a campaign that aimed to encourage Aboriginal gay and homosexually active men to test for HIV more frequently.

Aboriginal people in NSW suffer a greater burden of ill health than many other populations. The geographical, cultural and social circumstances of many communities, including high mobility, lower health literacy, and issues such as shame contribute significantly to underlying poor health status.

In 2013, around a third of all the newly diagnosed HIV positive people who were Aboriginal and Torres Strait were from NSW, the major mode of HIV transmission for was through unprotected sexual contact among gay and other homosexually active men.

In response the ACON Aboriginal Project developed the ACON Aboriginal HIV Testing Campaign as an extension of the highly successful *ENDING HIV* campaign.

## CAMPAIGN DEVELOPMENT

The ACON Aboriginal HIV Testing Campaign built on success of the existing *ENDING HIV* communication platform to target HIV testing information and education relevant to the needs of Aboriginal gay and homosexually men. The campaign utilises the existing creative strategic direction while incorporating the key messages that HIV testing is free, confidential and rapid.

The development process for the ACON Aboriginal Gay Men's HIV Testing Campaign was long and rigorous. The campaign material was tested through three separate quantitative research projects.

Aboriginal gay and other homosexually active men reported during the testing process that the campaign creative materials, strategic direction and key messages are both positive and appropriate to communicate the sensitive messages needed to encourage Aboriginal gay men to get tested for HIV.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

In keeping with the recommendations of the research the campaign creative strategy built on the success of the existing *ENDING HIV* design to target material that is both relevant to the needs of Aboriginal gay and other homosexually active men, simultaneously positioning the campaign as a component of the over overall *ENDING HIV* communication platform.

The creative strategy was impactful, bold and straightforward; promoting free, confidential and rapid HIV testing (results within 30 minutes).

The campaign was successfully launched in June 2015. The campaign consists of a mix of online, print, outdoor street posters and social media executions including:

- billboards in Redfern and Blacktown railway stations
- press advertisements in the Koori Mail and in other gay community media;
- outdoor street posters in Redfern and Blacktown;
- web banners, online advertising and a social media campaign; and
- development of a campaign website.

## CONCLUSION

Developing and delivering HIV Testing education materials to Aboriginal gay men presents complex challenge to HIV educators. A relatively small and highly mobile community, lower health literacy and issues of shame means that HIV Testing education materials need to consider a range of different strategies, including targeting materials specifically to meet the needs identified by Aboriginal gay men and other homosexually active men.

## EVALUATION

Following the finalisation of the campaign an evaluation of the impact of the campaign will be undertaken. The evaluation will be completed within the *ENDING HIV* evaluation framework.

## OUR WORK WITH ABORIGINAL GAY MEN

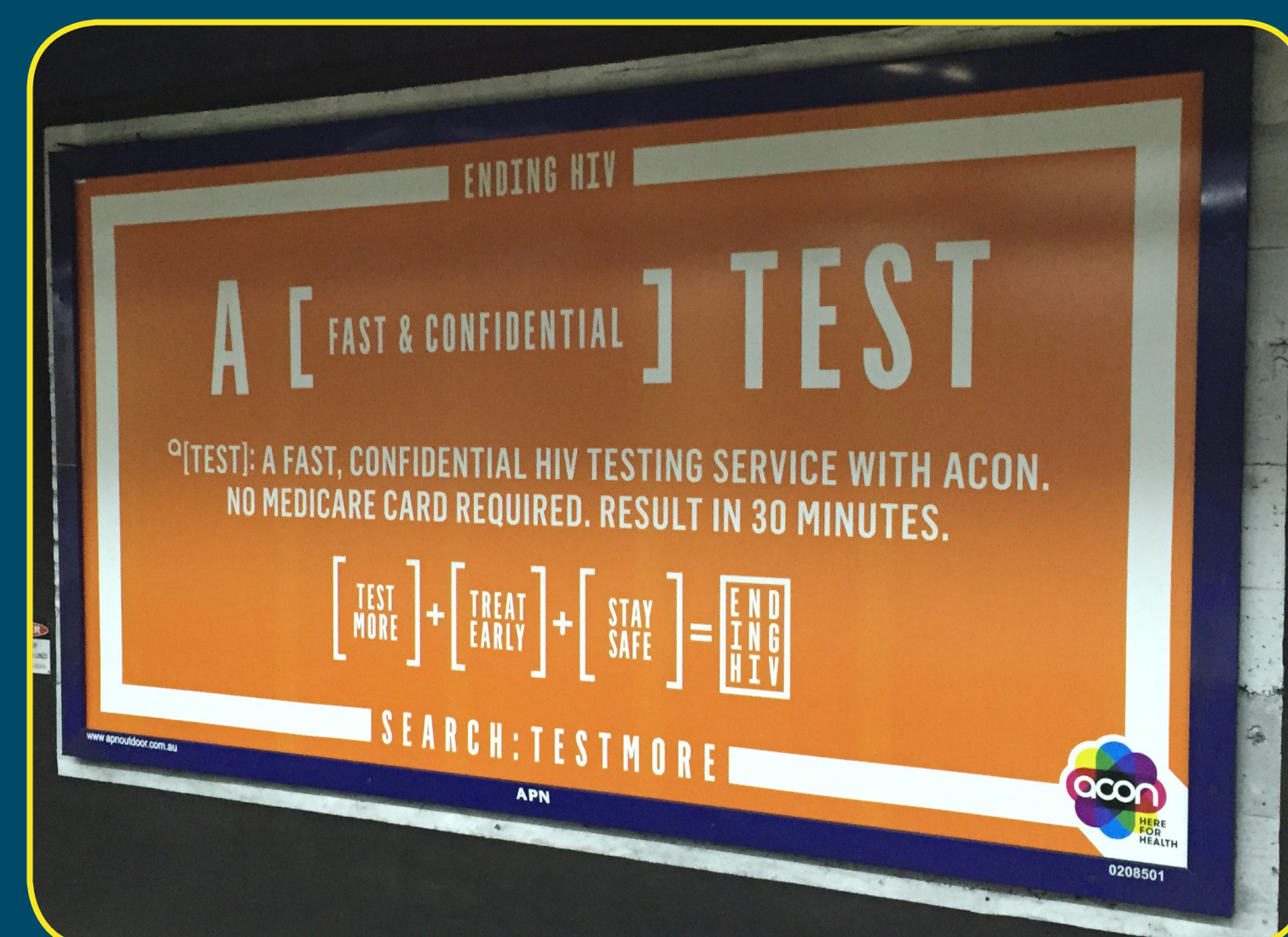
Since 1997 the ACON Aboriginal Project has worked with HIV positive and negative Aboriginal gay other homosexually active men, sistergirls/transgender people, lesbians and other same sex attracted women to provide community and culturally appropriate HIV and sexual health prevention education and support programs.

More recently the ACON Aboriginal Project led the development, market testing, community consultation and production of the ACON Aboriginal HIV Testing Campaign.

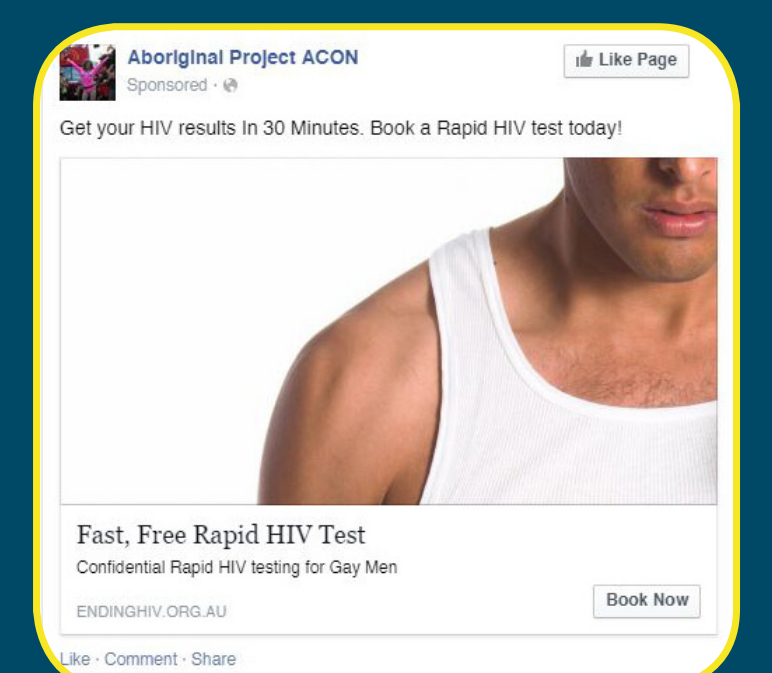
$$\left[ \begin{array}{c} \text{TEST} \\ \text{MORE} \end{array} \right] + \left[ \begin{array}{c} \text{TREAT} \\ \text{EARLY} \end{array} \right] + \left[ \begin{array}{c} \text{STAY} \\ \text{SAFE} \end{array} \right] = \left[ \begin{array}{c} \text{ENDING} \\ \text{HIV} \end{array} \right]$$

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

- Aboriginal gay identity was complex, dependent on context and layered between sexual and ethnic identities;
- the campaign creative direction did not necessarily need to rely on Aboriginal representation as a hook;
- the creative design needed to be salient and easy to understand; and
- ease of testing, cost (free) and confidentiality were seen as the most compelling messages to communicate.



Clockwise from top left: Launch of the Aboriginal Gay Men's HIV Testing Campaign, full page ad in The Koori Mail, Facebook advertising, poster paste up in the streets of Redfern, and billboard at Redfern railway station.



i. In recognition of NSW as Aboriginal land and consistent with NSW Health guidelines informed by consultation with Aboriginal communities, this document refers to 'Aboriginal people' or 'Aboriginal gay and homosexually active men' but is inclusive of Torres Strait Islander peoples.  
ii. AFAO. HIV statistics: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. <http://www.afao.org.au/about-hiv/the-hiv-epidemic/hiv-statistics-australia/hiv-statistics-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people>  
iii. Australian Bureau of Statistics. Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2011  
iv. AFAO. HIV statistics: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. <http://www.afao.org.au/about-hiv/the-hiv-epidemic/hiv-statistics-australia/hiv-statistics-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people>

