

### ***Tom Carter and Elizabeth (Beth) Hatch***

Beth Hatch and Tom Carter initially worked at Melbourne Communicable Diseases Centre as contact tracers, where they followed up people with sexually transmissible infections and their sexual contacts, ensuring that they would receive the required treatment and encouraged not to pass infections on to others. They soon started to see gay men who had HIV, many of whom subsequently died. At the Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital – the first Hospital to test for HIV – where they were surrounded by like-minded people, trying to uphold the human rights and dignity of people who were socially stigmatized and often rejected. Beth and Tom were the first nurses to test for HIV and give both positive and negative results and manage and support the outcomes. Tom remains in this position whereas Beth has moved to the University of Melbourne, Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health to help set up sexual health services and education for people in North Eastern Victoria.

Beth and Tom were founding members of a support and education group for nurses working in HIV, the Victorian AIDS Nurses Resource Group (now the Australian and New Zealand Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANZANAC) who organised the first HIV nurses' conference in Victoria). During this time Tom took on extra work, such as working on live radio station 3AW, answering questions and educating people about HIV and STIs. They were also founding members of groups such as AIDS line, VIVAIDS, a service for injecting drug users, Prostitutes' Collective (now Resourcing Health Information in the Sex Industry), Men's Service, Condom Action group, AIDS Housing Action Group and ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) among other, all in the hope that community fear and ignorance could become a thing of the past.

Tom and Beth have worked with some of the most marginalised and disadvantaged people living with HIV in Australia, including those with severe mental health issues or intellectual disabilities who may be either at high risk of HIV or at risk of infecting others. In every case, Beth and Tom's emphasis was on advocacy and human rights, seeking to ensure access to the best possible care for this client group, some of whom would have readily been incarcerated or institutionalised without proper care.

Tom and Beth's contributions have influenced governmental health policy. They were key advisers in developing policy and guidelines dealing with the sensitive issues, especially confidentiality, surrounding HIV contact tracing. They have influenced nursing practice in providing education across the country to nurses working in the community, sexual health and HIV and in acute settings, as well as through their work in establishing and promoting ANZANAC as an organisation for nurses.

Their contributions are of international significance because the human rights-based policies, practices and philosophy of care for people living with HIV and their sexual partners and contacts that Beth and Tom have contributed to and espoused are recognised as best practice HIV care management. Many countries seek to emulate Australia's successful response to the HIV epidemic. Tom and Beth have had a profound influence on Australia's HIV response in (the general nursing, psychiatric, public health and HIV prevention spheres especially). Yet Beth and Tom said that they were 'always just two nurses who had a deep belief that everyone we dealt with had the right to be dealt with in a non-judgemental manner that did not discriminate or

have any part of creating any form of stigma'. That, surely, is enough reason to be recognized for a Human Rights and Nursing Award.