

David Polson

HIV Survivor, Keynote Speaker on Resilience and founding Chair of QTOPIA

David Polson was one of the first 400 Australian men to be diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. That was back in 1984, and he immediately told himself the disease would not kill him.

At that time, David was advised by his doctors to tell only three people about the diagnosis because of the hatred, discrimination and stigma surrounding HIV/Aids. However, as he watched others with the disease die, he decided that to stop the stigma, he needed to introduce HIV Aids into the broader conversation... the more you talk about it, the less stigmatised you will become. As a result, David is a keynote speaker who talks to audiences around the country about living positively with HIV, HIV testing, and confronting stigma.

David is a co-founder and the first Chair of QTOPIA, Sydney. A place for Memory, Education and Celebration of Queer lives. The founding Co-Patrons of QTOPIA are Ita Buttrose and Michael Kirby.

More about David Polson:

David Polson has survived a long battle with HIV/AIDS, and in the process, he has volunteered to participate in many clinical trials - the essential key for medicine to understand which treatments work best in which circumstance. Under the care of the late Professor David Cooper, he undertook 28 HIV drug trials, all of which had significant and impactful side effects.

David's ability to persevere through the trials is a testament to his innate resilience and his dedication to helping medical science find a treatment or cure. He has effectively put his body on the line, motivated half by the hope that he will benefit from new drugs, and half by the hope that his participation will help the community and medical science, even if it doesn't help him.

The clinical trials David has volunteered for over 25 years have led directly to the development of combination therapy, one of the miracles of modern medicine now responsible for saving literally millions of lives around the world.

David's acronym for life is H.O.P.E., which stands for Humour, Optimism, Perseverance, and



Energy. And this is what he aims to deliver to others. After the death of Prof. David Cooper, David decided to become an HIV advocate and educator. For over 20 years, he has been an inspirational speaker, empowered by the aim to reduce the ongoing stigma of HIV/Aids. By educating and sharing his personal story of resilience, hope, and courage, he hopes to dispel myths surrounding HIV/Aids, promote a healthy and positive life while living with HIV, and replace people's fear and ignorance with understanding and acceptance.

As well as an inspirational speaker, David is an Ambassador for the St Vincent's Curran Foundation, which aims to provide everyone with access to excellent healthcare.

Client testimonials

“ LASA had the pleasure of inviting David to speak at our NSW/ACT State Conference. The audience comprised staff, management, Directors and owners who work in the age services industry - an industry experiences unprecedented stress, strain, scrutiny and regulatory reform. David's uplifting message of resilience, persistence, humility and optimism struck the perfect note for the occasion and the mood of the audience. In a session dedicated to a customer focus, the challenge issued of being responsive to the needs of each and every older Australian - no matter their background and life experience - was clear. I would happily recommend David to other's who may be looking for a speaker for their conference.

- **Leading Age Services Australia Ltd**

“ David is a wonderful advocate and exceptional speaker for furthering the cause of HIV/AIDS awareness. As a person living with HIV, David speaks with passion, wisdom and sincerity. David gave an incredibly candid and moving speech. His contribution was not only informative and expertly delivered, but it was genuinely compelling and moved many in the room emotionally. He spoke of his experience as a person living with HIV over many years, and captivated the audience with his insight and sincerity. Following the formalities, he was very happy to continue to engage with our guests. David is a consummate professional and an expert communicator with a generous and kind spirit.

- **Kirby Institute**

“ In Polly's (David's) case, his HIV treatments have caused heart disease and a very rare brain disease which will increasingly disable him. But Polly is the most positive person you could meet. He's not complaining. 'That's life' he says. 'There are people worse off than me. Think of all the beautiful people who are long gone'.

- **Prof. David A Cooper**

“ David Polson has been involved in providing education sessions to the students in the Masters program in HIV, STIs and Sexual Health at the University of Sydney for more than a decade. David has been an excellent at providing a positive person's perspective to future doctors,

nurses, public health professionals and scientists and has provided three decades worth knowledge about living with HIV. His contribution in making education about HIV much more real world and his ability to connect with his audience have been critical. His talk has always been well received and has generated significant impact on students... David has made a significant contribution in education of the future generation of professionals regarding HIV related stigma and discrimination and I wish him well.

- University of Sydney

“ David has long been a visible and active member of the LGBT+ community. When you meet him you immediately feel his energy and passion for supporting and educating others and see it in all he does. As part of KPMG’s National Pride Summit, David shared his personal story during a fire-side chat highlighting important history that we must not forget and celebrating the strength and resilience of our community. His heartfelt and compelling story of those who have made an impact on his life, and of his commitment to make a difference to the lives of others had a profound impact on the audience, with many commenting how David’s story moved them and felt it was a highlight of the summit.

- KPMG

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