



ANNUAL REPORT

2019 | 2020

Caring for our communities for 35 years

**We create opportunities for
people in our communities
to live their healthiest lives.**



ACON acknowledges and pays respects to the Traditional Custodians of all the lands on which we work.



About ACON

We are a fiercely proud community organisation. For our entire history, the work of ACON has been designed by and for our communities.

Established in 1985, our early years were defined by community coming together to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in NSW, and we remain committed to ending HIV for everyone in our communities. We do this by delivering campaigns and programs to eliminate new HIV transmissions. Supporting people living with HIV to live healthy and connected lives remains core to our work.

As we have grown, we have been proud to work with a diverse range of people to ensure their voice and health needs are represented in the work we do.

We help our communities take control of their health so they can look after themselves as well as their partners, family and friends. We offer a range of services including sexual health, mental health, alcohol and drugs, safety and inclusion, domestic and family violence and ageing.

We have continued to evolve as an organisation, developing significant new programs and services to meet the needs of our community, especially in the areas of training, capacity building, cancer prevention, and clinical testing and screening services.

Our head office is in Sydney and we also have offices in regional centres across New South Wales. We provide our services and programs locally, state-wide and nationally.

Contents

2019/2020 SNAPSHOT6

PRESIDENT/CEO MESSAGE.....8

COVID-19 & CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITIES10

HERE FOR 35 YEARS: HOW IT ALL BEGAN12

HERE FOR COMMUNITY: A STORY OF GRIEF, STRUGGLE, STRENGTH AND HOPE15

OUR BOARD18

OUR SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM20

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN22

FOCUS AREA 1: ENDING HIV TRANSMISSION FOR ALL IN OUR COMMUNITIES24

HIV PREVENTION.....26

HIV CAMPAIGNS28

HIV & SEXUAL HEALTH30

HIV TESTING32

FOCUS AREA 2: DELIVERING EXCELLENT, CLIENT-CENTRED CARE AND INNOVATIVE COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAMMING34

HIV SUPPORT.....36

MENTAL HEALTH.....38

LGBTQ HEALTH40

ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUGS42

DOMESTIC & FAMILY VIOLENCE44

FOCUS AREA 3: GIVING VOICE TO OUR COMMUNITY AND STRENGTHENING INCLUSION46

POLICY, STRATEGY & RESEARCH48

SAFETY & SOCIAL INCLUSION50

TRANS & GENDER DIVERSE HEALTH.....52

HEALTHY AGEING54

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY55

REGIONAL NSW56

PRIDE INCLUSION PROGRAMS.....60

FOCUS AREA 4: DEVELOPING FINANCIAL DIVERSITY, STRENGTH AND GROWTH64

DEVELOPING FINANCIAL DIVERSITY, STRENGTH & GROWTH.....66

FOCUS AREA 5: BUILDING A WORKPLACE THAT ATTRACTS AND DEVELOPS THE BEST PEOPLE70

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT72

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN76

FINANCIALS78

2019/2020 SNAPSHOT



3.1 million

Estimated online media reach



1.4 million

ACON campaigns, corporate and social video views



135,253

Safe sex packs distributed through the year



5,572

HIV tests across our network

2.7 million

Sessions in ACON's Ending HIV website

438,533

Digital interactions relating to HIV prevention across our online network

8,814

Counselling occasions of service through the year

3371

Free meals served at our weekly HIV meal service

2.1 million

Users across ACON websites

91,000

Connections across ACON social media channels

6,000

Clients across a[TEST]

156

Staff members throughout the year

PRESIDENT/CEO MESSAGE

When ACON was established in 1985, it was in response to a mysterious illness devastating our communities. Hysteria, misinformation, fear – it was a time of great uncertainty and anxiety.

But our communities banded as one to face the crisis head on and to provide care and support to those impacted by HIV and dying from AIDS. With unity and cooperation, knowledge and information, strength and resilience, we carried on and we sustained. We did it together.

Today, as we mark our 35th year, we find ourselves in the grip of another virus and again, our world is forever changed. And just as our communities came together when HIV/AIDS first hit in the 1980s, so too have people today united in the fight against COVID-19.

The coronavirus pandemic has brought with it massive disruptions and immense challenges to our daily lives. But throughout it all, we have been heartened to see the displays of care and compassion in our communities.

We pay tribute to all those who are helping others in the COVID-19 response, including the many healthcare workers who work so hard to keep us all safe, both now and in the early days of the crisis. We thank you for your courage and support. We also thank everyone in our communities for continuing to do their part in halting the spread of the coronavirus.

At ACON, we responded swiftly and effectively to COVID-19 with a series of actions to safeguard the health and wellbeing of our communities. The pandemic prompted increased demand for our services, particularly in counselling and client services. With a flexible approach and an agile stance, we were able to adapt our offerings to new frameworks and delivery methods to ensure sexuality and gender diverse people, and people living with HIV, had continued access to vital support and assistance

Our purpose is to “create opportunities for people in our communities to live their healthiest lives”. Even in the midst of the pandemic, we never faltered from that commitment. Now, at the completion of our first year of our Strategic Plan 2019-2022, we can reflect on a number of achievements that have contributed towards our goal of meeting our purpose and objectives.

Over the past year, we continued to make strides in our mission to ending HIV transmissions for all in our

communities. Data from the NSW Ministry of Health showed that, in 2019, there were 282 new HIV diagnoses in NSW, a decrease of 12% when compared to the average for the same period of the previous five years. Gay men and MSM accounted for 215 diagnoses, a reduction of 15% on the five-year average.

These outcomes show that our collective efforts to reduce HIV transmissions across the state continue to work. The use of HIV prevention strategies such as PrEP, condoms and Undetectable Viral Load, combined with frequent HIV testing and earlier uptake of treatment, have proven to be effective methods in reducing the spread of HIV. It's important that we maintain this momentum.

However, we are acutely aware of the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on HIV notifications. Research shows that sexual activity among gay men and other men who have sex with men declined sharply at the height of the lockdown due to social distancing and public health restrictions. At the same time, there was also a drop in PrEP use. While this may result in a signification reduction in HIV notifications – particularly in the short term – it could also put others at risk if they are not protected by PrEP or other HIV prevention options. As we adapt to a ‘COVID normal’ environment, ACON is providing information, targeted messaging and resources to ensure gay men continue to incorporate proven and effective HIV prevention strategies into their lives.

A strategic focus for ACON is to deliver excellent client-centred care and innovative community health programming and in this regard, we achieved many important outcomes. In 2019-2020, we continued to support our communities in areas such as mental health, alcohol and other drugs, ageing and community safety. We will continue to develop and expand these services to meet our communities’ needs through partnerships, advocacy and pursuing new funding opportunities.

Key to this is the exploration of a dedicated state-wide health centre for sexuality and gender diverse people and over the past year, we have been working with an extensive group of partners towards this endeavour. We have commenced work conducting a feasibility study on this facility, which we hope will become a reality in the years to come.

A significant feature of our work this year has been supporting sexuality and gender diverse people affected by domestic and family violence (DFV). We know that our

communities have unique experiences when it comes to DFV compared to the general population. Throughout the year, we have been developing resources and establishing partnerships to ensure LGBTQ people nationwide have access to appropriate DFV support services and messages.

Giving voice to our communities and strengthening inclusion is a priority for ACON and throughout the year we continued to expand our programs – both internal and external – to address the needs of populations including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and trans and gender diverse people.

Through our training, consultancy and inclusion teams, we continued to provide support to employers, sporting organisations and service providers to ensure the places our communities live, work, play and seek support are inclusive.

Developing financial diversity, strength and growth is crucial to our operations and sustainability. In the coming year, we will continue to explore new funding opportunities and bolster fundraising activities as we navigate our way through a post-COVID environment.

Of course, we could not have accomplished anywhere near what we have without the extraordinary dedication and hard work of our staff and volunteers. The passion and tenacity they bring to their work are nothing short of

amazing. This was brought into sharp focus during the pandemic, and we thank them for stepping up to the mark to ensure we were able to continue serving our communities during such challenging and difficult times.

We also acknowledge the support of our many partners, including those within the sector, other not-for-profit organisations, corporations, community groups and federal, state and local government agencies. We also thank researchers, clinicians, allied health professionals and other stakeholders for their continued collaboration with ACON. And we, of course, honour the NSW Government for their ongoing commitment to delivering a comprehensive response to HIV.

Finally, we thank our clients, supporters and the many people who make up our diverse communities for caring for each other and supporting ACON – not only in the last 12 months but for the past 35 years as well.

We dedicate this Annual Report, with its stories of care, compassion, resilience and support, to you.



Dr Justin Koonin
ACON President



Nicolas Parkhill
ACON CEO



COVID-19 & CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, ACON RESPONDED QUICKLY AND EFFECTIVELY BY DEVELOPING NEW INITIATIVES, TAILORING OUR EXISTING PROGRAMS AND RE-DESIGNING THE DELIVERY OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES.

ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Throughout the pandemic, ACON remained in operation with essential health services such as a[TEST], the Needle & Syringe Program and counselling and client services open to our communities. We also adapted our other programs and services to virtual settings and contact-less approaches, ensuring our communities continued to have access to vital health information, education, resources and support.

COVID SAFE PLANNING

We developed and implemented an organisational-wide plan on COVID-19. The plan outlines detailed actions on our response to the pandemic, including implementing COVID safe measures, transitioning back into the office in stages and responding to outbreaks.

FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, ACON supported its

workforce to work remotely. We provided our staff with equipment and safety training, upgraded our communication systems and technologies and implemented remote work policies and procedures. As we adapt in a new business environment, ACON is continuing to support our staff with flexible work arrangements to ensure health and safety.

COUNSELLING SERVICES

We adapted our counselling services to be delivered by phone and video, ensuring we continued to provide vital mental health support to our communities while adhering to public health restrictions. ACON counsellors experienced a spike in demand during lockdown and we continue to provide support during these challenging times.

SUPPORT WITH AOD USE

We developed resources to support our communities with their concerns related to alcohol and other drug use during

the lockdown. The resources aim to provide people with COVID-19 specific harm reduction advice in relation to transmission risk, how to access support and staying safe. This support was contextualised to COVID-19 and included blog posts and factsheets.

DOMESTIC & FAMILY VIOLENCE RESOURCES

We published articles on keeping our relationships healthy during the pandemic and how our communities can access support and safety if they or someone they know experience intimate partner or family violence.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

We produced a range of digital resources on managing self-care and staying strong during the pandemic. The messages, comprising print posters, videos and social media posts provided our communities with useful tips on maintaining their strength and resilience as well as information on how to access mental health support.

ACON FACE MASKS

ACON branded face masks were made available to all staff to help them keep

safe during the pandemic. Masks were also distributed to volunteers and community groups. Masks can be purchased with all proceeds supporting our COVID-19 efforts.

you[TEST]: TESTING FOR HIV AT HOME

We launched you[TEST], a service that allowed gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men to test for HIV in the comfort of their own homes. The contactless service provided clients with virtual access to a peer, who provided health promotion advice, explained the self testing options and process, and delivered information and referral support.

ONLINE PEER EDUCATION SESSIONS

We pivoted our education and peer support programs to online modalities. This ensured priority populations such as Asian gay men, young gay men and people living with HIV had continued access to important information on HIV, risk reduction, sexual health and relationships.

NEEDLE & SYRINGE PROGRAM

Our Needle and Syringe Program provides our communities with vital access to sterile injecting equipment and health information. In response to the pandemic, we ensured this essential service continued by implementing operational safety procedures that minimised contact between staff and clients.

MEAL SERVICE

Our HIV Meal Service, held weekly at our Surry Hills premises, provides vulnerable members of our communities with access to healthy food. At the height of the lockdown, we pivoted this service to a delivery and take-away only service, ensuring clients continued to have access to vital provisions in a COVID safe way.

RAINBOW MEALS & GOODIES

In partnership with Tropical Fruits and the Bobby Goldsmith Foundation, we launched a weekly food service to provide food relief to vulnerable members of our communities in the Northern Rivers region.

MULTICULTURAL FOOD ASSISTANCE

With support from the NSW Government, we teamed up with four queer multicultural community groups to provide food hampers to culturally and linguistically diverse LGBTQ people impacted by the pandemic.

COVID-19 ONLINE CLEARINGHOUSE

We launched an online portal on COVID-19 with information and resources relating to our communities with sections on HIV prevention and health, LGBTQ health, mental health, trans and gender diverse health, domestic and family violence, alcohol and other drug use and ageing.

ACON PRESIDENT / CEO VIDEO MESSAGES

We released a series of videos for our communities featuring ACON President Dr Justin Koonin and ACON CEO Nicolas Parkhill with messages on mental health, sexual health, staying safe and keeping resilient during the pandemic.

COMMUNITY ADVICE ON CASUAL SEX

We published a series of health messages on coronavirus transmission risk during casual sex, advising our communities to refrain from casual encounters at the height of local COVID-19 transmissions in NSW. As restrictions eased, we continued to provide vital harm minimisation information on casual sex to help our communities protect their health and the health of their partners.

COVID-19 & OUR COMMUNITIES FORUM

In April, at the height of the NSW lockdown, we held an online forum that explored the impacts of COVID-19 on our communities, providing accurate and evidence-based information on HIV prevention, HIV health, mental health and safety during the pandemic.

COVID-19 & OUR REGIONAL COMMUNITIES FORUM

In May, we hosted an online forum exploring COVID-19 and what it meant for regional LGBTQ communities. The forum included health and wellbeing experts from regional NSW communities as well as local entertainers from the Hunter and Northern Rivers areas.

LIVING TRANS DURING COVID-19 FORUM

For trans and gender diverse communities, we produced an online forum on staying safe, well and connected during the pandemic. Panellists ranged from trans and gender diverse community leaders, health experts and allies.

COVID-19 RESILIENCE FORUM

Exploring the importance of staying strong and resilient was the focus of our online COVID-19 Resilience Forum. The panel featured a range of mental health experts and practitioners from Sydney and regional NSW.

NEXT STEPS

ACON is continuing to monitor the situation closely. We remain flexible in our approach to ensure we are able to respond to issues swiftly and effectively. The health and safety of our staff, volunteers, clients and communities is our number one priority and we will undertake necessary steps to ensure their welfare and wellbeing.

HERE FOR 35 YEARS: HOW IT ALL BEGAN

IN 2020, ACON MARKS ITS 35TH ANNIVERSARY. NICK COOK LOOKS BACK AT THE EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE IN 1985 THAT LED TO OUR ESTABLISHMENT AND THE FORMATIVE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED.

On a warm Thursday evening, 7 February 1985, the NSW Teachers Federation Building was packed with 400 people who had come together for an unprecedented meeting. For more than three years the world had gradually been waking up to the reality of a killer virus that was spreading through the community. At first it was called Gay-Related Immune Deficiency, then when it was realised the disease had no sexual preference the name was changed to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). The medical response had been lacklustre and the political response was virtually non-existent.

Those who gathered, mostly gay men, knew that if anything was going to happen to combat this overwhelming threat, they would have to do it themselves. By the time they walked out that night, they had

officially formed the AIDS Council of NSW (ACON).

It's very difficult, from a modern perspective, to fully describe just how ground-breaking this moment was. Nothing like it had ever happened before. The three groups who were most at risk – gay men, people who inject drugs and sex workers – were by far the most marginalised in all of society. They were widely despised and many saw the virus as a punishment from God. Far too often the view was openly expressed that the “poofers, junkies and whores” should be left to die.

For many months ACON had to operate out of the Midnight Shift nightclub because no landlord would rent space to an AIDS organisation. Even among the doctors and politicians there was some reluctance to act and when they did take steps they were hampered by the fact the affected communities didn't trust them. The medicos had only recently decided that homosexuality wasn't a mental illness, while many members of parliament still felt that is was a crime.

The affected communities, led in the early stages by gay men, took the

fight into their own hands. ACON provided support to people who were infected, developed education campaigns for those at risk, and began vocally advocating for a better response from the medical and political establishments.

This last step was the most important in the long term, eventually creating a world-leading relationship between the affected communities, the medicos, the researchers and the politicians. There is no single reason why Australia did so exceptionally well in confronting AIDS, but this has to be at the top of the list.

Of course, ACON's creation and development were not a smooth process. The early years were particularly turbulent and both of the first presidents were toppled by dramatic coups.

Meanwhile, there were vicious public brawls between ACON and other community organisations, particularly Bobby Goldsmith Foundation and Community Support Network. Nobody can be blamed for this. Emotions were inevitably high as they watched their friends and lovers die in growing numbers, while

there was no clear path through the dangerous uncharted waters they were trying to navigate. There is, however, one person who deserves credit for bringing it all under control. The appointment of Bill Whittaker as ACON's first executive director was a seminal moment in the history of the organisation. He was able to quell the fighting, create a thoroughly professional organisation and lay the foundations upon which everything else could be built.

His successor Don Baxter also deserves special mention. He took the reins at the beginning of the 1990s and guided ACON through the worst years, when the death toll finally peaked. The emotional strain on the staff and volunteers was unfathomable.

There is no organisation in Australia that was more devastated by the AIDS epidemic than ACON. Some days they would close the office because there were multiple funerals and nobody had a chance to get to all of them. There are far too many fallen heroes to name, but some cannot possibly go without a mention. They include Norman “Beryl” Boyle, Andrew Carter and his twin brother Don (Dodge Traffic), Terry Giblett and Andrew Morgan.

ACON is most widely known for its work with gay men, which makes sense because they have always represented the vast majority of people living with HIV in Australia. However, there were also very active programs for women, sex workers, injecting drug users and others. Their success can be clearly seen in the fact that Australia never had a major outbreak in any of these communities. Remarkably, throughout the entire epidemic there wasn't a single recorded case of somebody contracting HIV from a female sex worker.

In 1996 the world tilted once again on its axis for the affected communities, when combination treatments meant that AIDS was no longer a death sentence. HIV was now a manageable condition that people



“The early years were particularly turbulent and both of the first presidents were toppled by dramatic coups.”

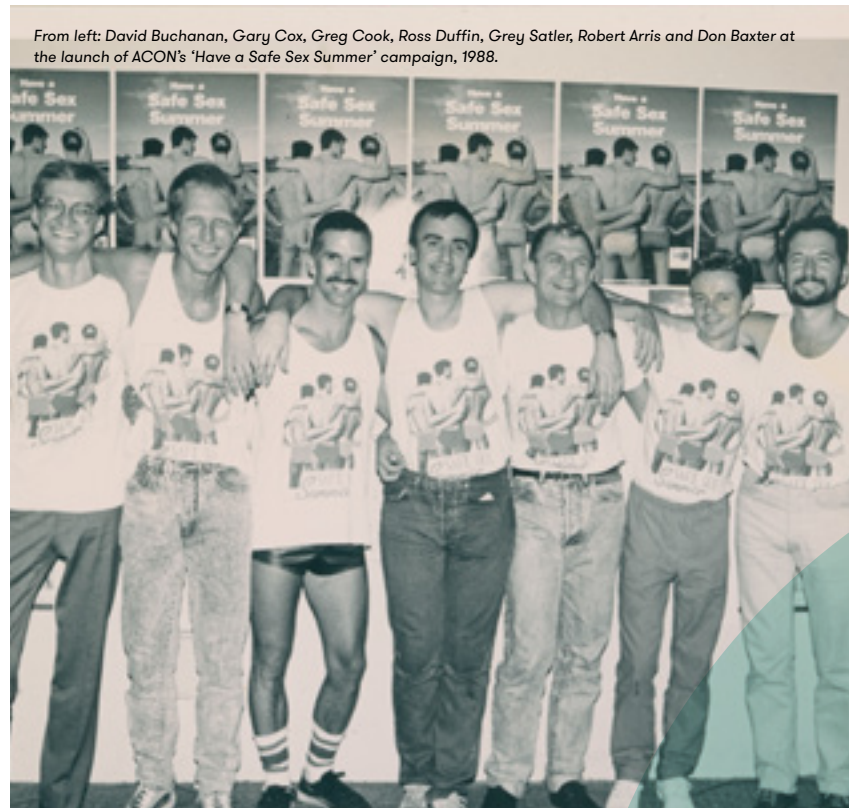
ACON at the Sydney Mardi Gras Parade in 1990



could live with into the foreseeable future. Many thought this would make ACON redundant and there was another fierce public debate about what should become of it, fuelled by widespread uncertainty. Here was this amazing institution that had been built by the hard work of the community, many of whom had dedicated their final days to its creation. Was it really going to all go to waste? And what of the people who still needed support, fewer in number but no less deserving of help?

The decision was finally made in 2000, that ACON would shift focus and become an organisation primarily concerned with LGBTQ health. There was much angst that this would lead to a major drop in government funding and mean that people living with HIV would be forgotten. Neither happened. In fact, the politicians recognised the value of what was occurring and funding actually increased, reaching \$8 million a year for the first time.

Since then ACON has continued to broaden its focus, always looking for new ways to help LGBTQ people while never losing sight of its original goal. We all live in hope of a time



From left: David Buchanan, Gary Cox, Greg Cook, Ross Duffin, Grey Satler, Robert Arris and Don Baxter at the launch of ACON's 'Have a Safe Sex Summer' campaign, 1988.

when there is no need for ACON, when people of varying sexuality are so thoroughly integrated into society that the idea of a health organisation specifically for them is entirely outdated. However, that day is still a long way in the future and impossible to see just yet. Until then, we all have reason to be grateful to those 400 people who came together in 1985

to create ACON, and to the many thousands who have played a role in it since.

Nick Cook is the author of *Fighting For Our Lives: The History of a Community Response to AIDS*, published by NewSouth Publishing and ACON. Read a review of *Fighting For Our Lives* on page 15.



The first Candlelight Vigil was held on Tuesday, 1 October 1985, led by the 'Fighting For Our Lives' banner – the very same banner that was used at the first ACON meeting in February 1985.

A STORY OF GRIEF, STRUGGLE, STRENGTH, COMMUNITY & HOPE

IN 2018, ACON COMMISSIONED JOURNALIST NICK COOK TO WRITE A BOOK EXPLORING THE ORIGINS OF THE ORGANISATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE AIDS EPIDEMIC IN AUSTRALIA. TWO YEARS LATER, COINCIDING WITH ACON'S 35TH YEAR, *FIGHTING FOR OUR LIVES* WAS PUBLISHED BY NEWSOUTH PUBLISHING.

BY DION KAGAN

By 1994, a phenomenon known as "AIDS fatigue" had set in among many in the only recently established Australian HIV sector. The work's emotional toll was relentless; "grief suspension" tactics were common. "The train wreck that goes on forever" is how one peer-support-group member described it. It was still about two years before the arrival of the game-changing drug combination that, when and where they became available, transformed a positive diagnosis from a near-certain death sentence into a lifelong but manageable illness.

In HIV epicentres such as Sydney, those at the frontline of community care – campaigners, educators and especially those caring for people edging closer to death – had been living in a state of exception for well beyond a decade. Many of those lost were their own co-workers, friends, family and lovers.

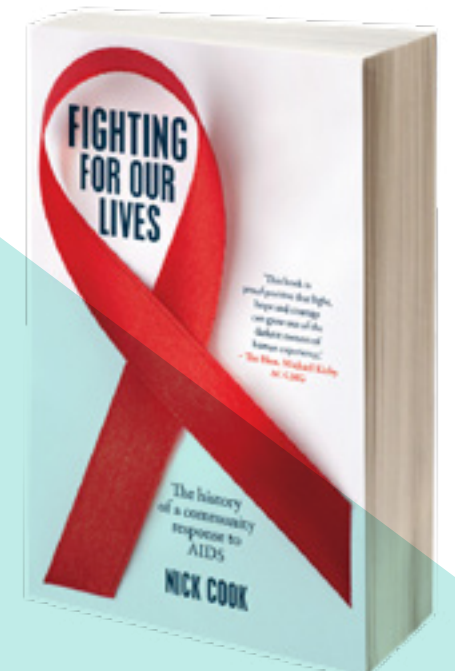
"The sheer scale of the devastation is difficult to properly comprehend," writes Nick Cook in his history of the period, *Fighting for Our Lives*. People often reach for war metaphors, or natural disaster analogies, but sudden catastrophes such as bushfires aren't quite apt as a comparison. The trauma and political volatility of the AIDS crisis years wrenched on and on, and for people living with HIV/AIDS, the progression of the disease itself was rarely swift. AIDS, Cook writes, "does not sneak up on a person, but instead wears them down over a number of years".

The plague years have been revisited considerable times in recent years, in books, exhibitions and on screen. Some commentators have even declared the history exhausted.

Fighting for Our Lives assembles a fresh local narrative that examines the formation and fortunes of the AIDS Council of NSW (ACON), a key

community organisation that marks its 35th anniversary this year.

In essence, it's an organisational history, pieced together from the council's rich archive, queer community press from the period and interviews with surviving AIDS world figures.



But the ACON case study also tells a larger story about a country's bold, creative, rapid innovations in modern public health, at the core of which was an unprecedented three-way collaboration between AIDS affected communities, medical fraternities and the state.

This celebrated "tripartite relationship" became the cornerstone of Australia's much celebrated, world-leading HIV/AIDS response, and *Fighting for Our Lives* offers a straight-talking account of exactly how "buggers, druggies and prozzies" were able to shape effective AIDS policy.

For example, Australia is one of the few countries in the world that avoided an epidemic among injecting drug users. Neither has Australia reported a single confirmed case of HIV transmission from a female sex worker. These are, as Cook argues, some of our greatest public health triumphs. We invented daring, community-led safer sex campaigns that spoke frankly to people in their own sexual vernaculars, explaining how to f--- safely in the midst of a sexual epidemic.

Even after AIDS fatigue set in by the mid-'90s (an exhaustion that, reading Cook's history, feels palpable after 200-plus pages of battling stigma and hysteria, lobbying wildly recalcitrant senior health department officials, settling internecine community quarrels, and so on), Australian safer sex education remained at an innovative forefront. Campaigns acknowledging the emergent realities of "condom fatigue" and "negotiated safety", for example, broke with public health orthodoxies, but were shown to be sensible, effective at HIV prevention and stigma reducing. Many of these interventions are globally recognised.

Media panic mongering and the wowserism of political reactionaries are recurring motifs in this history. Australia's official response may have been exemplary, but our news outlets still "delighted in portraying gay men as a devastating threat to society". While children and straight people with HIV/AIDS became objects of national mourning, sex deviants, sex workers and drug users were folk devils.

AIDS was the first global pandemic of the media age, and any AIDS-related news, especially if it could involve prurient keyhole peeking at the depraved practices of junkies and sex deviants, was catnip for moralising and wildly stigmatising tabloid headlines, and such hysterical coverage has had both immediate and legacy impacts on community health.

The high stakes of community organising and activism are another type of spectacle, and in *Fighting for Our Lives* all the dramatic elements are there: ACON's "good-cop, bad-cop" relationship with militant activist group ACT-UP; tense alliances between the gay community and other groups on the margins; the fraught representation of women in the epidemic; ferocious lobbying of researchers and drug companies to fast-track new treatments; and on and on.

Such flashpoints and frictions occurred globally, and Cook is also careful to note the allure of high drama at the expense of the more mundane, bureaucratic accomplishments of battling an epidemic, and, to his credit, he chronicles both.

Local AIDS histories are also a pantheon of potent, charismatic and determined people. Certain famed contributors such as Labor health minister Neil Blewett, and

Ita Buttrose in her role as Chair of the National Advisory Committee on AIDS (NACAIDS) are widely recognised. *Fighting for Our Lives* pays tribute to lesser known but pivotal players – such as Norman Boyle, the early face of ACON, "flamboyantly arch, proudly camp and defiantly homosexual at a time when the vast majority of gay men remained closeted". Cook treats these figures reverently, but doesn't spare us their missteps, misjudgements and the frequently harsh criticism they received.

"One of the most harrowing aspects of researching this history," he writes, "has been seeing page after page of young men's faces in the *Sydney Star Observer* death notices." This is another of the book's motifs: a liturgy of death notifications, matter-of-factly recorded, indicating both the scale and the timeline of these deaths.

With the coverage of coronavirus presenting deadly echoes of the panicked and obstructive role the media played during the worst years of AIDS, we would do well to recognise the lessons of this history. *Fighting for Our Lives* is a well-timed reminder of the potential in this country to transcend a climate of hysteria and reactionary public policy in the co-ordination of humane, evidence-based public health initiatives, backed by medical and scientific experts, and delivered by and for the communities directly affected. Lest we forget.

Dion Kagan is a writer, editor, social researcher and the author of *Positive Images: Gay Men and the Culture of "Post-Crisis"* (Bloomsbury).

This article first appeared in The Sydney Morning Herald and has been reprinted with permission.



Fighting For Our Lives author Nick Cook (centre) with former ACON Vice President Robert French (left) and former ACON Executive Director Don Baxter



Photography: Deep Field Photography

CELEBRATING THE LAUNCH OF *FIGHTING FOR OUR LIVES*

To celebrate the release of *Fighting For Our Lives*, we held a launch event at The Beresford in Surry Hills in January. Over 200 attended the event to get the first copies of the book and to hear from author Nick Cook. In a riveting panel discussion, he was joined by former ACON Executive Director Don Baxter and former ACON Vice President Robert French – key figures in *Fighting For Our Lives*. The book, which charts the origins of ACON in the context of the history of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Australia, was warmly received and garnered praise. Published by NewSouth Publishing, the book is available at all good book stores and online retailers.

OUR BOARD



Justin Koonin, President, BSc (Hons), PhD, CFA, GAICD

Justin has worked within LGBTQ community organisations for over a decade, and is a former convenor of the NSW Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby. Internationally, he represents civil society on the steering committee of the UHC2030 partnership, working towards the health-related UN Sustainable Development Goals for 2030. He is co-chair of the Civil Society Advisory Group for the Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-Being for All, as well as the WHO Social Participation Technical Network. Justin is also a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors Not-for-Profit Chairs Advisory Forum. He is trained as a mathematician, and currently works as an investment analyst. He has also worked as a postdoctoral research associate (at the University of Sydney), and as a consultant in the areas of predictive analytics and data science.



Louisa Degenhardt, BA (Hons), MPsychology (Clinical), PhD

Louisa is UNSW Scientia Professor, NHMRC Senior Principal Research Fellow and Deputy Director at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) at UNSW. She was awarded her PhD in 2003, examining the comorbidity of drug use and mental disorders in the Australian population. She has honorary Professorial appointments at University of Melbourne's School of Population and Global Health, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, and University of Washington's Department of Global Health in the School of Public Health. Louisa conducts diverse epidemiological studies including data linkage studies focusing on people with extra-medical or dependent opioid use, chronic pain, analysis of large-scale community and clinical surveys, and cohorts of young people. She is currently CI with CI Dore and Farrell on an NHMRC Program Grant focussed on drug dependence and viral hepatitis.



Somali Cerise, BA, MSc

Somali has over 15 years of experience as a human rights and gender equality expert with an international profile. She has led large research and policy initiatives focussed on range of gender equality issues in Australia, the UK at the OECD and United Nations. Somali is currently a Program Director with the Male Champions of Change and supports Elizabeth Broderick's international gender equality work including her role as an Independent Expert with the UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women. Somali is also an Adjunct Associate Lecturer in the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences at The University of Sydney. She has previously been a Convenor of the NSW Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby, a board member of the Inner City Legal Centre and Aurora Foundation. Somali is an Adjunct Associate Lecturer in the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences at The University of Sydney. She has a BA (UTS) and a Master of Science (Human Rights) (London School of Economics and Political Science).



Atari Metcalf, MD, BSc

Atari is a junior medical doctor who also brings over 15 years of experience in health promotion research, policy and strategy. Prior to practising medicine he held senior research roles for online youth mental health services, ReachOut Australia and USA, teaching roles with VicHealth and Curtin University and worked as an analyst on national inquiries into asylum seeker, transgender and intersex health and human rights for the Australian Human Rights Commission. Before joining ACON's board Atari served as a board director at Suicide Prevention Australia and as co-chair of Twenty10 incorporating NSW Gay and Lesbian Counselling Services.



Andrew Purchas OAM, Vice President, BEc, LLB

Andrew has over 15 years of experience as a senior executive in the legal, financial services as a senior associate with Corrs Chambers Westgarth and Chief Security Officer for the Westpac Banking Corporation. Andrew has had a long involvement with sports administration and is founder of the Sydney Convicts Rugby Club, co-founder of the Pride in Sport Index and was President of the Bingham Cup Sydney 2014 and Chairman of International Gay Rugby.



Julie Mooney-Somers, BSc, GradCert EdStud, PhD

Julie is an Associate Professor in Qualitative Research in Health at Sydney Health Ethics at the University of Sydney where she teaches into the Master of Public Health. A social scientist, her research examines equity in health and health services in relation to sexuality, gender, indigenous status, and youth. She has been the joint coordinator of SWASH, the longest running regular survey of lesbian, bisexual and queer women's health, since 2009.



Benjamin Bavinton, BA (Hons), MPH, PhD

Benjamin has worked at the Kirby Institute, Faculty of Medicine, UNSW Sydney since 2010 and is currently a postdoctoral research fellow. His research focuses on the behavioural, biomedical and epidemiological aspects of HIV prevention among gay and bisexual men in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. Both in Australia and internationally, he has worked in HIV prevention for over a decade in the areas of community education, policy, capacity development, and research. He worked at ACON in gay men's peer education from 2004 to 2010.



Christian Dunk, BA (IR) Hons

Christian has experience in political advisory roles across three Australian jurisdictions and works as an adviser to the NSW Government. Christian is a mentor with the ANU Alumni Mentoring Program and has previously been a member of the Postgraduate Coursework Committee of the University of Sydney where he completed a Masters program.



Steven Berveling, SJD, BSc, LLB

Steven is a barrister specialising in town planning and environmental law. He has been HIV+ since May 1996, and lives life to the full. He is an avid competitive cyclist and amongst other races has competed 3x in the Race Across America, has won numerous golds in Gay Games, and holds the Australian record for the Hour Record (age). Steven seeks to confirm that HIV is no barrier to sport, both physically and socially, and that stigma and discrimination against HIV+ people is totally unwarranted. Steven speaks regularly to a range of groups about living with HIV.



Zoe de Saram PSM, MAICD, BAgreC

Zoe is a highly respected professional with considerable experience in the design and execution of strategy, policy, and service delivery. She has held a number of senior executive roles in the NSW Government and has a deep understanding of the architecture of government and the way it operates. She is also very well connected to a diverse range of key personnel across Federal, State and Local governments. Zoe is currently Executive Advisor, Public Sector Practice at the North Point Consulting Group.

OUR SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM



Nicolas Parkhill
Chief Executive Officer

Nicolas Parkhill has over 22 years of experience in the public and community health sectors. Since 2009 he has been the CEO of ACON. Prior to this role Nicolas worked in a variety of senior management and policy roles for NSW Health and the NSW Cabinet Office. He also has a background in social marketing campaign management and public relations. Nicolas is a former board member of ACON, the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations and APCOM, the peak body in the Asia Pacific region for men who have sex in relation to HIV, sexual health and human rights.



Karen Price
Deputy CEO

Karen Price has 20 years' experience in the health sector, in Federal and State Government roles, and the NGO sector. Karen has experience across HIV and sexual health, mental health, aged care, drug and alcohol, and anti-doping in sport. Across these roles, Karen has had extensive experience in policy and program development; partnership development; clinical service design and management; health promotion and campaign development; regulatory and statutory functions; monitoring and evaluation. Karen has represented the Australian Government at the UN, served on a number of advisory and governance boards, and has been involved in national research projects in an investigator and advisory capacity.



Dr Susan Culverston
Director, Corporate Services

Susan has more than 20 years' experience in management, administration and leadership across a range of environments including the corporate sector, not-for-profit organisations and both Commonwealth and State public sectors. Susan has a Doctorate in Business Administration with the focus of her thesis being 'Collaborations in the Not for Profit Sector'. She is passionate about ensuring that organisations in the sector continue to adopt leading practices in governance and business management.



Brent Mackie
Associate Director, Policy, Strategy & Research

During his 30-year career Brent Mackie's work has included communications, media and social marketing, management, population health, social research, and policy and program development. Brent has worked in numerous senior leadership roles in both government and non-government organisations. Brent has a Master of Arts by Research in Health and Sexuality as well as degrees in sociology and communications. Brent has extensive experience in health research and is a passionate community advocate and volunteer.



Matthew Vaughan
A/Director, HIV & Sexual Health

Matthew is the Acting Director for HIV Sexual Health and ACON's Principal Campaign Planner, where he leads the strategy and development of the multi award-winning campaign Ending HIV, which seeks to end HIV transmissions in NSW. Matthew has been working within the community services sector for the past 15 years working in a variety of roles within government, non-government and community-based organisations at state, national and international levels. Matthew has a love of technology and digital media, and specialises in how that passion can be used to build effective behaviour change interventions.



Dawn Hough
Director, Pride Inclusion Programs

Dawn Hough is the Director of ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs (Pride in Diversity, Pride in Sport, Pride in Health + Wellbeing. Dawn started with ACON in 2009 specifically to develop and establish the national Pride in Diversity Program and to develop the Australian Workplace Equality Index (national benchmark on LGBTQ workplace inclusion). Since that time, the program has grown substantially and gained an international reputation for its leading practice and gold standard index. Dawn has a background in financial services, talent management and organisational development with academic qualifications in adult education and cognitive science.



Sarah Lambert
Director, Community Health & Regional Services

Sarah Lambert is the Director of ACON's Community Health and Regional Services responsible for a portfolio that includes client services, a range of LGBTQ health programs, regional services and Pride Training. She is an occupational therapist by background with over 15 years' experience working in the health and community sectors. Previously she held senior clinician roles in mental health and alcohol and other drug clinical services before moving into the community sector to do community development, health promotion and service development. She holds a Bachelor in Health Sciences (Occupational Therapy), Masters in Health Sciences (Alcohol and other Drugs) and diplomas in management and training.



Mark Latchford
Associate Director, Pride in Diversity

Mark Latchford joined Pride of Diversity after a 35-year career at IBM, where he held various lines of business senior executive roles based in Australia, Japan, France and Hong Kong. He brings substantial experience in technology, business development, finance, organisational resilience, governance as well as strategic design and execution. While at IBM, he was also the Executive Sponsor of the LGBTQ community and sat on the Pride in Diversity Advisory Forum. Mark has also held board positions in a number of other commercial and NFP entities.



Reg Domingo
Associate Director, Marketing, Communications & Fundraising

Reg is ACON's Associate Director of Marketing, Communications and Fundraising. He has over 15 years' experience in journalism, publishing, public relations and strategic communications. He has a background in news and feature writing, as well as radio broadcasting and digital media, specialising in LGBTQ issues. Over the years, he has held a number of senior roles in magazine publishing overseeing editorial strategy, marketing and promotions, community partnerships and business development.



Sabine D'Haeseleer
Company Secretary

Sabine joined ACON in 2013 in the role of Executive Assistant to the CEO and was appointed by the ACON Board in 2018 as the Company Secretary. Sabine is originally from Belgium, where she studied business administration/secretariat and languages. She has spent most of her working life in Canada, Norway and Angola before moving to Sydney in 2001 where she continued to build her career in different sectors and industries as a Senior Executive Assistant.



OUR STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2022

We released our Strategic Plan in August 2019, which maps our direction for the next four years, setting out our purpose, vision, values and priorities.

The ACON Strategic Plan 2019-2022 reflects the changing nature of the health needs of our communities, and of the broad range of people, experiences and identities that make up who we are here for.

We look forward to working with our communities, our partners and our allies over the life of the plan to deliver better health outcomes for our communities.

OUR PURPOSE

We create opportunities for people in our communities to live their healthiest lives.

OUR VISION

We strive to be a global leader in community health, inclusion and HIV responses for people of diverse sexualities and genders.

OUR VALUES

Our values inform who we are:

- Community
- Collaboration
- Informed

Our values inform how we work with people:

- Equity
- Inclusion
- Compassion

Our values inform how we make decisions:

- Excellence
- Courage
- Innovation

OUR WORK IS FOCUSED ON

1. Ending HIV transmission for all in our communities
2. Delivering excellent, client-centred care and innovative community health programming
3. Giving voice to our communities and strengthening inclusion
4. Developing financial diversity, strength and growth
5. Building a workplace that attracts and develops the best people

Photography: Deep Field Photography





ENDING HIV TRANSMISSION FOR ALL IN OUR COMMUNITIES

- 1.1 We provide up to date information and deliver innovative social marketing campaigns to our communities on a variety of sexual health issues.
- 1.2 We develop peer-led prevention programs to reduce transmissions of HIV and other STIs in our communities.
- 1.3 We improve access to testing with models that are responsive to the needs of our communities.
- 1.4 We advocate for innovative responses to end HIV transmission and reduce STIs in Australia.

HIV PREVENTION

IN ORDER TO DRIVE DOWN NEW HIV NOTIFICATIONS AND VIRTUALLY ELIMINATE HIV TRANSMISSION IN NSW, WE MUST CONTINUE TO EFFECTIVELY ENGAGE AND MOBILISE PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITIES TO TEST OFTEN, TREAT EARLY AND STAY SAFE. WE CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THEM DO THIS BY DEVELOPING AND PROMOTING CAMPAIGNS THAT BUILD KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS, OPERATING HIV AND STI TESTING SERVICES, RUNNING HIV PREVENTION AND RISK REDUCTION COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS, PROVIDING A RANGE OF SUPPORT SERVICES AND DISTRIBUTING HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF FREE CONDOMS EVERY YEAR THROUGHOUT NSW.

NSW HIV DATA: WHERE ARE WE AT?

Annual data released this year by the NSW Ministry of Health showed that HIV transmission rates continued to decline in NSW during 2019-2020.

Between January and June 2020, the number of NSW residents newly diagnosed with HIV decreased by 22% compared to the average for the same period of the last five years. Notifications fell even lower during the April and June quarter at the height of the NSW lockdown. During this time, there were 44 new HIV infections, which was 41% less than the five-year average. Gay men and men who have sex with men (MSM) accounted for 33 diagnoses, which was 45% fewer compared to the average of the previous five-years. However, it is important to note that HIV testing rates also fell during this period due to service restrictions and redeployments.

In 2019, the number of NSW residents diagnosed with HIV decreased by 12% compared to the average of the previous five years. In total, there were 282 new HIV diagnoses. Gay men and MSM accounted for 215 diagnoses, which was a 15% decrease on the five-year average.

Pre-pandemic, HIV testing rates remained high. In 2019, there were 603,824 HIV serology tests performed in NSW – a 2% increase in HIV testing on the previous year. Gay men and MSM accounted for 62% of all tests.

Starting HIV treatment early provides great health benefits and stops onward transmission. By the end of last year, the median time between diagnosis and treatment initiation was 16 days.

Of those newly diagnosed with HIV infection in 2019, 91% initiated

treatment within six weeks of diagnosis, and 46% within two weeks – up from 39% in 2018. Of those on ART by six months, 93% had an undetectable viral load at the time of the six month follow-up, which means that it is no longer possible for them to transmit HIV.

However, while there are decreases in HIV diagnoses in 2019, there are still those being diagnosed late. There was a 33% increase for overseas born MSM being diagnosed late compared to the five-year average. Over half of these overseas-born men diagnosed late had lived in Australia for four years or less, a 70% increase compared with the five year average, and most had likely acquired their HIV infection overseas.

ACON continues to work with the NSW Ministry of Health and other partners in engaging all groups at risk of HIV transmission, in HIV prevention, testing and care messaging and services – particularly as we navigate our way through the pandemic.

ENDING HIV: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM

Funded by the NSW Ministry of Health and launched in 2013, the *Ending HIV* campaign remains one of ACON's most visible and long-standing health education initiatives. A multi-channelled, multi-language framework for community mobilisation, its goal is to educate and engage gay, bisexual and other MSM around HIV prevention and sexual health. The platform communication objective is based on three pillars: to encourage frequent HIV and STI testing, promote the early uptake of treatment for those diagnosed with HIV, and to prevent HIV transmission through strategies such as condom use, taking PrEP or PEP and/or achieving an Undetectable Viral Load.

Community engagement remained strong across the *Ending HIV* website and social media platforms. Over 2019/2020, the website attracted over 2 million visits, and over 2.5 million page views. Our combined social media community exceeded 25,000 contacts across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

'THANK YOU': HIV PREVENTION CAMPAIGN

Coinciding with the Sydney Mardi Gras Festival in February, we launched *Ending HIV's* multi-disciplinary HIV prevention campaign, *Thank You*. The campaign was developed to engage gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men in an effort to raise awareness of HIV and reduce transmissions for all within our community. The campaign sought to acknowledge the collective efforts of gay and bisexual men in the HIV prevention movement and, in the process, re-galvanise them as we continue towards our goal of ending new HIV transmissions in NSW.

Thank You was implemented state-wide, across multiple community, social and outdoor channels. The accompanying video featured more than 20 people from all lived experiences within the community,

with differing serostatuses, gender experiences, abilities, and cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

For more on the *Ending HIV Thank You* campaign, go to page 28.

EMEN8: NATIONAL HIV & SEXUAL HEALTH DIGITAL INITIATIVE

Now in its third year, *Emen8* is ACON's national health promotion initiative produced in partnership with Thorne Harbour Health and funded by the Australian Department of Health. The project provides key information for good sexual health behaviours for same-sex attracted men (cis and trans) online and social media.

Getting attention for HIV and STI education is challenging. *Emen8*

combats message fatigue and makes sexual health information more appealing through a 'stealth health' approach. Sexual health guidance is embedded into content about experiences and conversations reflecting the lives of men who have sex with men – covering relationships, dating, sex, travel, entertainment and more.

Combined with a modern approach to digital marketing, the project engaged MSM across all states and territories at a rate more than 20 times Facebook's average in 2019. These impressive results secured a position for *Emen8* to highlight its successes at the AIDS 2020 international conference.



IN 2019/2020...

- We distributed **135,253** safe sex packs (condoms and lube) to pubs, clubs, clinics, other venues and events across NSW.
- We conducted **22** peer education workshops across NSW on HIV, safe sex and risk reduction.
- We recorded over **438,533** digital interactions relating to HIV and STI prevention through our various online platforms and digital channels.
- We convened **13** community forums relating to HIV and STI prevention across NSW.
- We conducted **631** HIV prevention and awareness outreach sessions – in-person and online – across NSW. This includes our Sexperts program in selected sex-on-premises venue and digital apps.



ACON staff delivering safe sex packs and installing health promotion messages at the 2020 Sydney Mardi Gras Party

ACON peers at the HIV testing stall at Sydney Mardi Gras Fair Day

HIV CAMPAIGNS

THANK YOU

RATIONALE

In NSW, we've made great strides towards reducing HIV transmissions. Year-on-year, we've seen testing rates increase, more people who are being diagnosed with HIV getting onto treatment sooner and a rising number of people taking PrEP. These factors combined is resulting in a sustained decrease in HIV infections.

This year, *Ending HIV* wanted to acknowledge the efforts of the community in the HIV prevention movement and, in the process, re-energise them to keep up the momentum. The *Thank You* campaign was born from the notion that thanking someone can have profound effects on one's emotions and have a positive influence on their behaviour.

DISTRIBUTION

Released in February, *Thank You* was implemented state-wide, across multiple channels. Various media formats were used including social media, outdoor media, video, online dating applications, print and radio. Reach of the campaign was broadened with visibility at events such as Mardi Gras Fair Day, the Mardi Gras Party and Parade, as well as regional festivals and events. Supporting these activities was the distribution of more than 13,000 promotional products.

Over the four-week period, the campaign was displayed on over 400 outdoor placements including billboards, digital panels and street posters. The video was widely shared across social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Printed resources were distributed at partnering venues, including sexual health clinics, licensed gay venues and sex-on-premises venues.

RESULTS

An online evaluation survey collected feedback from over 700 gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men across NSW. The survey found an overwhelming number of respondents (84%) said the campaign communicated its key messages effectively. Ninety-one per cent of respondents found the advertisements engaging, with many calling it 'eye-catching' and 'modern'.

Advertising attributed to 57% recall, increasing to 71% for men living with HIV. One in three respondents took action, such as seeking out information on HIV/STI testing and other health information.

When asked how the campaign made them feel about the community's achievements in working towards ending HIV for all, and 63% said they felt 'very or extremely positive'.

The video was well-received with 80% of respondents rating the video of high quality. Online, the video was watched more than 280,000 times on social media.

Over time, we've measured knowledge and beliefs of our audience towards HIV prevention, treatment and testing. With regards to the statement, 'Everything has changed, we can now dramatically reduce HIV transmission', 89% of survey respondents were in agreement, the highest percentage ever recorded for this question and a notable shift from 48% seven years ago.



Photography: Deep Field Photography; Revolution 360; Courtesy: Ending HIV

HIV & SEXUAL HEALTH

WE'RE HERE TO HELP SEXUALITY AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE IN NSW TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR SEXUAL HEALTH BY PROVIDING INFORMATION AND A RANGE OF SUPPORT SERVICES INCLUDING PEER-RUN TESTING FACILITIES FOR HIV AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS; SEX, HEALTH AND RELATIONSHIP WORKSHOPS; FREE CONDOMS, SAFE SEX PACKS AND RESOURCES; AND DEDICATED PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG GAY MEN, ASIAN GAY MEN, SEXUALLY ADVENTUROUS MEN, LGBTQ WOMEN AND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE.

PEER EDUCATION PROGRAMS & WORKSHOPS

ACON's Peer Education Team continued to engage and educate gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (cis and trans) on HIV prevention, sexual health, relationships and community connection.

This year we delivered seven face-to-face peer education workshops that attracted 71 participants. We also reinvigorated our online 'Sexperts' program by training six new volunteers who conducted 61 online conversations around sex, sexual health and HIV over mobile apps.

We supported a number of events including the International Student

Networking event hosted by The City of Sydney's International Student Leadership and Ambassador Program, Charles Sturt University Open Day and the Broken Heel Festival. Helping to deliver these activities were a dedicated team of volunteers who contributed around 390 volunteer hours.

ENGAGING YOUNG GAY MEN ON HIV & SEXUAL HEALTH

ACON's project for young gay men, SPARK continued to provide vital support and education to young gay, bisexual and queer men (cis and trans) through workshops programs that explore HIV, sexual health, identity, community and relationships.

This year, the project delivered seven face-to-face peer education

workshops, which were attended by 80 people. SPARK also launched its first peer education workshop for young trans guys called 'Right Stuff', which was well received and welcomed by community.

Throughout the year we also supported a number of events including Queer Screen, Minus 18 Queer Formal, UNSW Sextember, NAIDOC week, World AIDS Day and other community events to raise awareness of HIV and sexual health. Volunteers contributed over 450 hours in support of the project.

HIV & SEXUAL HEALTH PROMOTION FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

Engaging gay, bisexual men and other men who have sex with men,

from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities remains a strong focus of our health promotion work. This year the Aboriginal Project took part in several community events to promote vital HIV prevention and sexual health messages. One such event was the successful Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander HIV Awareness Week event held in Redfern. Delivered in partnership with BlaQ and Koori Radio, the event provided an opportunity for members of the LGBTQ community to network, learn and collaborate on ways to address HIV within Aboriginal communities.

The Aboriginal Project was also involved in the production of the First Nations Float, who led the 2020 Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade. Under the banner 'What Matters? We Matter!', the float featured more than 100 LGBTQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island marchers and their allies.

Throughout the year, we engaged with community members at events like Yabun Festival, Fair Day and Boomalli Mardi Gras Exhibition. The year concluded with the launch of our Online Yarning Circles series, focusing on the social and emotional wellbeing of our LGBTQ Aboriginal communities.

SUPPORT FOR SEXUALISED DRUG USE

ACON is currently developing a new program to support community members around sexualised drug use. Devised in partnership between ACON's HIV and Sexual Health Division and Alcohol and Other Drugs teams, the program aims to engage gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men seeking support for concerns about their drug use during and around sexualised contexts. A range of focus groups with stakeholders helped inform the development of this program, which is expected to launch in 2021.

HIV & SEXUAL HEALTH AWARENESS COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Our ACON Tradies, teams of volunteers that promote safe-sex messages, provided hundreds of hours of community engagement around sexual health and distributed thousands of condoms and safe sex packs at the Sydney Mardi Gras Festival and Tropical Fruits in Lismore.



Peers from ACON's Asian Gay Men's Project at Sydney Mardi Gras Fair Day

INFORMATION, RESOURCES & SUPPORT FOR ASIAN GAY MEN

ACON's Asian Gay Men's Project continued to support and engage gay men and other MSM from Asian cultural backgrounds on taking control of their sexual health and wellbeing. Asian gay men face unique barriers when it comes to HIV prevention, treatment and care, and we work with these communities to ensure they have access to appropriate messages and services.

Our peer-led forums and workshops including ConverAsians and SocialisAsians, which provide important HIV and STI education and information, garnered strong engagement throughout the year.

We delivered six ConversAsians forums covering topics such as HIV, sexual health, relationships, and racism more, attracting over 120 people.

Our volunteers, who contributed over 930 hours over the year, led the delivery of 35 social events. An estimated 1400 people attended these gatherings, getting access to vital health information and resources.

We continued to deliver the a[TEST] Chinese Clinic and provided peer translation services for other ACON programs.

Throughout the year, we also participated in five interagency working groups, and attended nine community and stakeholder events to promote HIV prevention and safe sex messaging to our community members.



Peers from ACON's young gay men's project SPARK with community members and supporters at their annual Youth History Walk led by historian Robert French (seventh from left)

HIV TESTING

GETTING PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITIES TO TEST FOR HIV MORE OFTEN IS VITAL TO OUR EFFORTS TO ENDING HIV TRANSMISSIONS IN NSW. MAKING TESTING EASIER AND MORE ACCESSIBLE AS WELL AS EDUCATING GAY AND OTHER MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF TESTING MORE REGULARLY ARE IMPORTANT AREAS OF FOCUS FOR OUR APPROACH TO HIV PREVENTION.

a[TEST] SERVICES

Launched in 2013, a[TEST] is located at four sites across Sydney: Darlinghurst, Newtown, Kings Cross and Surry Hills. a[TEST] is a partnership with three Local Health District clinical services including Sydney Sexual Health Centre, RPA Sexual Health Centre and the Kirketon Road Centre.

Due to the pandemic, three of our sites were temporarily closed (Newtown, Kings Cross and Surry Hills) while operations were streamlined into our six-day-a-week service, a[TEST] Oxford Street. We are proud to have been able to continue to provide access to testing services for asymptomatic men during this period where access to testing facilities was reduced state-wide due to the pandemic. a[TEST] Oxford Street has adapted and implemented COVID-19 safety precautions such as social distancing, temperature checks, client COVID-19 assessments and referral pathways.

Throughout the year, 24 trained peers attended to over 6,000 clients across the a[TEST] network, administering 5,572 rapid HIV tests. Around 3,493 of these tests were conducted at a[TEST] Oxford Street, making it the state's most popular community-based testing facility for gay men. As well as HIV and STI screenings,

clients at a[TEST] are also given access to information and resources on HIV prevention strategies such as PrEP, PEP and UVL. The service further acts as an active referral pathway into other ACON services such as counselling, peer education workshops and more.

Our integrated PrEP service model at Oxford Street also continues to be popular. This service provides testing for HIV, testing for STIs and renal function tests for clients using PrEP who wish to continue accessing services through a peer-based model. The service is particularly popular for men who do not have access to Medicare and may be unable to meet the financial costs of accessing PrEP.

you[TEST]

In June, ACON launched you[TEST], a virtual, peer-led service that facilitates access to HIV testing and provides health promotion for gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men, across NSW. The service was established to respond to the sharp decrease in availability of HIV testing sites in NSW as result of the pandemic. Its goal was to provide sexually active men access to HIV testing during lockdown.

you[TEST] leverages elements of the a[TEST] experience but recreates it for online delivery. Clients are

connected with peers who walk them through the self-testing options and provides them with sexual health information and resources. Following the appointment, a self-testing device is mailed to the client to do the test at home in their own time.

With the new service, gay men and other MSM in rural and remote areas are now able to access HIV testing with virtual assistance from peers. This contactless service provides our communities with another option to get tested for HIV.

a[TEST] CHINESE CLINIC

The a[TEST] Chinese clinic continued to operate on Thursdays at a[TEST] Surry Hills but was disrupted by the pandemic since March 2020. A partnership between ACON and Sydney Sexual Health Centre, the clinic provides Chinese-speaking gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men, easier access to HIV and STI screening and information.

The entire a[TEST] experience is delivered in Mandarin and registration systems translated into simplified Chinese. This service has been set up in response to rising HIV notifications among these men in NSW born overseas.

While temporary service interruption continues due to the pandemic,

Community members are supported by ACON peers at a[TEST] Oxford Street



referral pathways for Chinese men continue through a[TEST] services. This includes referrals to translation services for HIV and STI testing, access to HIV prevention resources such as Ending HIV website translated in Simplified Chinese, and community engagement programs like ACON's Gay Asian Men's Project.

trans[TEST]

In September 2019, ACON, in partnership with the Kirketon Road Centre, launched trans[TEST]. A community-based sexual health service for anyone who is trans or gender diverse, trans[TEST] operates twice monthly at Clinic 180 as part of a one-year pilot.

Like all ACON testing services, trans[TEST] is a peer-led service. This means trans peers work in partnership with a nurse to provide HIV and STI testing for clients in a culturally appropriate environment. Where necessary, trans[TEST] also provides access to a doctor which expands service options to clients. Additional trans[TEST] services include vaccinations, PrEP and PEP services, STI treatment, cervical screenings and blood tests to check hormone levels. Referral pathways to and advice about gender affirming healthcare can also be provided.

trans[TEST] is temporarily closed due to

the pandemic with plans to resume the pilot when possible.

DRIED BLOOD SPOT TESTING

ACON continues to support the NSW Ministry of Health with the Dried Blood Spot (DBS) study. The DBS test uses technology that allows people to test for HIV and or Hep C at home. It is a self-collection test that requires a finger prick sample of blood to be collected which is then sent by mail for laboratory testing. Results are delivered by phone, text message or email.

Over the last year, ACON continued to produce and distribute promotional collateral for all DBS study sites state-wide in coordination with the study coordinator. ACON also includes information about DBS testing in our health promotion activities including online resources, peer education workshops and various projects.

HIV TESTING IN REGIONAL NSW

Key to achieving our goal of ending HIV transmissions in NSW is getting gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men, to test more frequently, including those living in regional areas. Throughout the year, we delivered temporary or 'pop up' HIV and STI screening sites in key

locations in regional NSW, coinciding with major LGBTQ community events. In September, we provided 45 on-site rapid HIV tests, STI screenings as well as registrations for the DBS test at the Broken Heel Festival in Broken Hill. In the Hunter region, we provided 41 HIV tests at Newcastle Pride. We also continued to provide HIV and sexual health outreach across Southern and Far West NSW, the Hunter, South Coast and Northern Rivers, providing community members in those regions the opportunity to receive information relating to HIV testing, STI screenings, where to get a test, as well as PrEP, HIV and STI risk.



2

DELIVERING EXCELLENT, CLIENT-CENTRED CARE & INNOVATIVE COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAMMING

- 2.1 We support people living with HIV to live fulfilled, healthy lives in which they are active members of their community.
- 2.2 We ensure that our care and support services are of an excellent standard through ongoing needs assessment, co-design, inclusive marketing and ongoing evaluation.
- 2.3 We ensure that our communities are actively and meaningfully included in our work and within our organisation.
- 2.4 We seek to find better models of care and support for members of our communities that are left behind by current service provision, including the provision of support for young sexuality and gender diverse community members.
- 2.5 We examine innovative ways to meet the health needs of our communities where they are at, including the ongoing investigation of an LGBT Health Centre.

HIV SUPPORT

WE'RE HERE TO HELP SEXUALITY AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR HEALTH, AS WELL AS THE HEALTH OF THEIR PARTNERS, BY PROVIDING UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION AS WELL AS A RANGE OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES. THESE INCLUDE WORKSHOPS, ONE-ON-ONE PEER SUPPORT, COUNSELLING SUPPORT GROUPS, MEALS, CARE COORDINATION AND HOME-BASED CARE.

COUNSELLING SERVICES FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV

ACON is here to assist people living with HIV needing support in relation to their mental health and wellbeing. We provide a priority service for people newly diagnosed with HIV and offer free counselling for people living with, at risk of, affected by or testing for HIV. This year, our team of counsellors provided 829 counselling occasions of service to people living with HIV. We provided 99 counselling occasions of service to people newly diagnosed with HIV. We also provided 178 counselling occasions of service to HIV negative men accessing HIV and STI prevention and risk reduction counselling.

SUPPORT PROGRAMS FOR PEOPLE NEWLY DIAGNOSED WITH HIV

Despite the success of contemporary HIV treatments, dealing with the impacts of an HIV diagnosis can range from unsettling to traumatic. One of our key services for people newly diagnosed with HIV is a[STARTx], a weekend workshop for gay men who have received an HIV diagnosis within the last two years. Presented in partnership with Positive Life

NSW, a[STARTx] (formerly known as 'Genesis') is a peer-based workshop, which means it is run by peers living with HIV and explores topics such as treatment, HIV disclosure, stigma and resilience, while connecting men going through a similar experience in a safe space and leveraging the power of social connection. This year, we held three workshops, which were attended by 22 people. In partnership with The Institute of Many, we held three 'graduation' gatherings for those who completed the workshops.

ACON also provides a peer navigator program to support those newly diagnosed in an one-on-one environment. ACON delivered 60 peer navigation sessions this year. Peer navigators speak a range of languages including English, Chinese, Thai, Malay and Arabic.

CARE COORDINATION FOR PEOPLE WITH HIV

We continued to assist people living with HIV experiencing health, personal and social issues receive appropriate support and care through our Care Coordination Service. These needs may include mental health issues, domestic and family violence, alcohol and/or

drug use, financial/legal matters, or housing stress. Our counsellors work closely with clients and allied health professionals in ensuring access to relevant healthcare and support services. This year, 112 people living with HIV accessed care coordination services.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT NETWORK

Community Support Network, or CSN, provides much-needed practical support for people living with HIV. Through this program, our team of trained volunteers deliver practical assistance to help people with HIV live as independently as possible in their own homes. Services include helping with household chores, grocery shopping, meal preparation and gardening. This year, 35 volunteers provided more than 1200 occasions of care to 76 clients.

OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

We delivered seven community forums to raise awareness of issues affecting people living with HIV, including 'Migration and HIV' and 'Wellbeing with HIV & COVID-19'.

We served 3371 meals to people living with HIV throughout the year, either in-person at ACON Surry Hills and, following the pandemic, through takeaway and delivery.

Our HIV support service scored very well among people living with HIV in our annual client satisfaction survey. High scores of 9 or 10 out of 10 were reported for satisfaction, value and recommendation to others.

Photography: Harrison Sarasola

MENTAL HEALTH



WHILE MANY PEOPLE WITHIN NSW'S SEXUALITY AND GENDER DIVERSE COMMUNITIES LEAD HAPPY, HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE LIVES, THERE ARE A RANGE OF ISSUES RELATING TO POORER MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES, SUCH AS ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, SELF-HARM, SUICIDE IDEATION AND SUICIDALITY, WHICH AFFECT A HIGHER NUMBER OF LGBTQ PEOPLE COMPARED TO THE WIDER POPULATION. WE'RE HERE TO HELP LGBTQ PEOPLE AND PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR MENTAL HEALTH BY PROVIDING INFORMATION, A RANGE OF COUNSELLING SERVICES AND A CARE COORDINATION PROGRAM FOR PEOPLE WITH COMPLEX NEEDS.



MENTAL HEALTH & COVID-19

This year, ACON delivered a numbers of initiatives to support our communities' mental health and wellbeing amid the pandemic. In March, we adapted our counselling services to be delivered by phone and video, ensuring we continued to provide support to those needing assistance while adhering to public health restrictions.

We produced various digital resources on topics related to COVID-19, including dealing with stress and anxiety, practicing self-care and managing alcohol and other drug use.

Our weekly Meal Service, which provides lunch meals to people living with HIV and other vulnerable community members, transitioned to take-away and delivery modes, ensuring clients were still able to access much needed provisions.

During this time, staff regularly checked in with clients by phone or video, as many live alone. We also delivered several virtual forums exploring COVID-19 and its impact on our communities, including a panel discussion dedicated to mental health and resilience. ACON is continuing to provide support to our communities during these challenging times.

COUNSELLING SERVICES FOR LGBTQ COMMUNITIES

ACON's team of counsellors continued to provide support to sexuality and gender diverse people on a range of issues relating to their mental health and wellbeing. There was sustained demand for our counselling and client services in 2019-2020, as a result of the bushfire emergency and the pandemic. This year, our counsellors provided 639 counselling sessions to LGBTQ community members.

Fifty eight clients living in Sydney and South East Sydney LHD and within the St Vincent's network received support for suicidal thoughts and aftercare through funding from the NSW Ministry of Health.

HELPING PEOPLE WITH COMPLEX NEEDS

Sometimes people in our community experience health, personal or social issues which can impact on their capacity to look after themselves and others. These needs may include mental health issues, domestic and family violence, alcohol and/or drug use, financial/legal matters, or housing stress.

Through our Care Coordination Service, clients with complex needs get teamed up with allied health professionals who can help them access relevant healthcare and support services, and increase their ability to manage their care and treatment. Our care coordinators work with clients over three months to develop a care plan and provide support to help clients achieve their goals and meet their needs.

This year we provided over 830 care coordination occasions of service to sexuality and gender diverse people.

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS: RAINBOW INCLUSION AWARD

ACON was proud to sponsor the inaugural Mental Health Matters Rainbow Inclusion Award at the 2019 Mental Health Month Awards hosted by mental health advocacy organisation Wayahead and the NSW Mental Health Commission. The award recognised mental health programs, projects or initiatives that demonstrate commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of people from sexuality and gender diverse communities. The winner was Rainbow Waves Festival Committee, Pambula Mental Health Service.

The initiative builds on ACON's long-standing partnership with Wayahead and our continued efforts to shine a light on LGBTQ mental health. In October 2019, for the seventh year, ACON provided small grants for LGBTQ communities to support events that raise awareness of mental health during Mental Health month.



RAINBOW MENTAL HEALTH LIVED EXPERIENCE NETWORK

ACON established a Rainbow Mental Health Lived Experience Network through funding by the NSW Mental Health Commission under their Lived Experience Framework. Network members were trained in advocacy skills, clarified their values, refined their storytelling skills and learnt how to effectively represent sexuality and gender diverse communities.

Eleven sexuality and gender diverse community members with lived experience of mental health distress from across NSW trained to represent our communities in codesign and consultation processes around mental health. Meeting monthly, network members continue to shape ACON's new mental health programs, consulting on workshops and campaigns related to practicing self-care, supporting peers around experiences of distress, accessing services and building resilience.

ACON has also commenced a collaborative partnership with the NSW Mental Health Commission to ensure that LGBTQ experiences and perspectives are reflected in developing research around mental health literacy.



LGBTQ HEALTH

WE'RE HERE TO HELP SEXUALITY AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE IN NSW TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR SEXUAL HEALTH BY PROVIDING INFORMATION AND RANGE OF TESTING SERVICES, CANCER AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS, WORKSHOPS, AS WELL AS SUPPORT SERVICES.

ACON CANCER PROGRAMS

This year ACON entered into a three-year partnership with Cancer Institute NSW to reduce the impact of cancer among sexuality and gender diverse communities in NSW.

Over the three years (2019-2022), the program aims to increase LGBTQ people's awareness of the importance of regular cancer screening and preventative lifestyle behaviours through the delivery of targeted health messaging and community engagement activities. The program will deliver targeted campaigns on bowel screening, smoking cessation and alcohol risk in relation to cancer. These campaigns will be underpinned by a new ACON health project and a dedicated website which will house information about cancer screening and prevention for our communities.

This year we have had a strong focus on qualitative and quantitative research on LGBTQ people's knowledge, attitudes and behaviours around bowel screening, smoking, quitting and alcohol consumption. We have also partnered with UNSW Social Centre for Research in Health to develop a literature review exploring the acceptability and efficacy of LGBTQ targeted health promotion.

Finally, we have been working with ACON Pride Training and Cancer Institute NSW to develop a tailored eLearning module for all of Cancer Institute NSW, BreastScreen NSW and NSW Quitline staff around LGBTQ inclusion.

We look forward to the next two years of this important partnership as we work with Cancer Institute NSW to improve cancer outcomes and referral pathways for people in our communities.

CHECK OUT: LGBTIQ+ SEXUAL HEALTH CLINIC

The Check OUT Clinic, which is run in partnership with Family Planning NSW, saw 205 clients for HIV and STI testing, and/or cervical screening over the past year. While the majority of clients were queer, lesbian, or bisexual cis women, the clinic continues to see a large percentage of trans and/or gender diverse clients (22%). Clients that identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander accounted for 2.5%, while 22% of clients speak a language other than English at home, and 20% of people who attended the clinic this year live with a disability.

Almost 20% of our appointments this year were returning clients, which shows strong community uptake of the service. Ninety-eight per cent of clients were satisfied, 100% found the service to be LGBTQ+ friendly, safe and non-judgemental, 98% of people would recommend the service to other people, and 63% of clients had already done so when surveyed.

Fifteen LGBTQ+ peer workers have been trained in total, with ten currently on the roster, and 100% of clients were satisfied with their peer consultation.

The service was closed due to COVID-19 in early March but will reopen as soon as possible with a COVID Safe plan in place.

SWASH: SYDNEY WOMEN & SEXUAL HEALTH SURVEY

Biennial recruitment of the long-running Sydney Women and Sexual Health (SWASH) survey in March 2020 resulted in over 1500 completed surveys – our biggest response to date. In partnership with University of Sydney and researchers Julie Mooney-Somers and Rachel Deacon, SWASH continues to be an important source of data relating to LGBTQ women across a number of areas. The survey captures data on identity, sexual health, mental health, violence, tobacco and drug use as well as cancer screening behaviours. This exceptional response will help inform and underpin ACON's work in LGBTQ health. The official 2020 SWASH report will be released later in 2020.

SILVER SESSIONS

In January, we partnered with the City of Sydney to deliver Silver Sessions, a series of workshops and social gatherings for LGBTQ women over 55. Over four weeks, the workshops provided attendees access to information on health and ageing, wills and legal support, financial coaching and fitness, and gave participants an opportunity to network, socialise and share concerns about getting older in a safe space. The workshops were attended by 15 women from across Sydney, ranging in age from 53 to 69.

HEALTH CENTRE

ACON has been in discussions and working towards a Health Centre for our communities since 2016. In 2018, ACON and PwC completed a draft, high level business case to facilitate a discussion about the merits of an integrated health service designed specifically for people of diverse sexualities and genders in NSW. In 2019, ACON welcomed the NSW Government's support for a detailed Feasibility Study for the Centre, and depending on the Study, funding to establish a multidisciplinary Health Centre.

ACON's Strategic Plan articulates our purpose which is about creating opportunities for people in our communities to live their healthiest lives. The Health Centre is a major initiative to deliver on this purpose. With the help of our partners and supporters, we hold great ambition for and on behalf of our communities for this Health Centre – a dedicated health service that is designed around the delivery of excellent, client-centred, inclusive care to help address unmet needs across our communities.

As an election commitment of the NSW Government, we have an unprecedented opportunity to support more people directly, putting more control of health into the hands of our communities. The Feasibility Study will be delivered to the NSW Government by March 2021.



Photography: Deep Field Photography; City of Sydney/Katherine Griffiths

ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUGS

WE'RE HERE TO HELP SEXUALITY AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE REDUCE THE HARMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE USE OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS (AOD), BY PROVIDING A RANGE OF RESOURCES AND SUPPORT SERVICES. WE ALSO WORK WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS TO HELP THEM BETTER SUPPORT THE NEEDS OF LGBTQ PEOPLE AND PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV.

AOD SUPPORT MESSAGES DURING COVID-19

Following restrictions, we produced a range of resources on AOD use during lockdown. These resources were developed with the aim of providing COVID-19-specific harm reduction advice in relation to transmission risk, offering support and guidance to community members on managing AOD use, referrals to support services and casual sex messaging.

ACON produced blog posts and five factsheets covering topics such as drug use prevention, crystal and alcohol use, and substance support, and these were made available via ACON's AOD support website *Pivot Point*. From April to June 2020, *Pivot Point* was visited 11,000 times with 14,500 pageviews.

SUBSTANCE SUPPORT SERVICES

We know that most sexuality and gender diverse people and people living with HIV who use AOD do so in a non-problematic way but some require support. Our Substance Support Service provides short term counselling of up to 12 sessions with the ability to re-enter as required, assisting people to better manage their use, cut down or quit. Counselling support is also available to family, friends and partners of loved ones who have problematic use. Since this service commenced in 2009, it has supported a range of community members to manage their substance use and improve their overall mental health and wellbeing. Funded by Central Eastern Sydney PHN, our substance support counsellors provided over 1600 occasions of service. Community feedback indicates that the service is delivering great outcomes for people using alcohol and other drugs. The service received average scores above 9.5 out of 10 for satisfaction, value and recommendation, which was reinforced in an independent evaluation by University of NSW, through

a NSW Ministry of Health evaluation grant, which yielded positive results and feedback from clients.

PIVOT POINT: HARM REDUCTION ONLINE RESOURCE

Pivot Point is ACON's digital resource for sexuality and gender diverse people who are looking for support in relation to their AOD use or who are seeking information and advice about how to reduce the harms associated with use. As well as information on AOD and helpful strategies on reducing use or quitting, *Pivot Point* features an online self-assessment tool allowing visitors to gauge the risks from their AOD use. Visitors can also find directories for resources and support services. In 2019-2020, *Pivot Point* recorded more than 45,000 visitors and over 65,000 pageviews.

HARM REDUCTION CAMPAIGNS DURING MARDI GRAS

Funding from NSW Ministry of Health allowed ACON to develop and implement an AOD harm reduction micro campaign in the lead up to the 2020 Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras season. The campaign targeted sexuality and gender diverse community members and aimed to increase understanding around the risks of GHB and MDMA use by raising awareness of overdose signs and symptoms, reducing overdoses and addressing barriers in seeking medical assistance for overdoses and general harm reduction. The campaign included animated videos, web pages, printed harm reduction posters for all Mardi Gras events, digital banner advertising across networking apps, a printed flyer resource about GHB overdose distributed to community venues and blog posts on ACON's *Pivot Point* website about staying safe while partying. Campaign videos were viewed over 25,000 times on ACON's social media channels, with posters positioned across all major Mardi Gras events. The webpages and blog posts on *Pivot Point* recorded 21,500 visits throughout the campaign period.

ACON provides Substance Support counselling. Inset: ACON Rovers

NEEDLE & SYRINGE PROGRAM

ACON continued to provide sterile injecting equipment to drugs users via our Needle and Syringe (NSP) program located in Sydney, Lismore and Newcastle. Across all our NSP sites, we distributed over 288,000 units of equipment as well as over 2,400 condoms. In the wake of the pandemic, changes were implemented to ensure social distancing and the safety of clients and staff during service. While we saw a drop in the number of clients, those accessing the service were encouraged to take additional supplies. We recorded 9,188 occasions of service and 202 referrals across the three facilities. The NSP program substantially contributes to efforts to reduce the transmission of blood borne viruses such as HIV and Hepatitis C among people who inject drugs in NSW.

AOD PARTNERSHIPS & OTHER INITIATIVES

ACON has established a partnership with the National Centre for Clinical Research on Emerging Drugs and is co-leading a study to examine cultures of GHB use among sexuality and gender diverse people. This study will generate insights around experiences of GHB overdose and community practices of overdose prevention. Evidence developed from this research will inform our work in health promotion.

In partnership with ACON's HIV and Sexual Health Division, ACON's AOD team have worked alongside clinicians from the St Vincent's Stimulant Treatment Program, Sydney Sexual Health Centre and researchers from the Kirby Institute to devise a new program comprising of peer-led brief interventions to address harms associated with sexualised drug use. This new service will be piloted in late 2020 for broader implementation in 2021.



ACON ROVERS: HARM MINIMISATION PROGRAM

The ACON Rovers continue to provide AOD harm reduction services at LGBTQ dance parties and events in NSW. Rovers work alongside medical teams, security and venue staff to identify the early signs of drug overdose among patrons and help to prevent serious adverse incidents, and are highly valued and respected at the events they attend.

There are around 115 volunteer Rovers across NSW, and this year Rovers attended at total of 18 separate LGBTQ community events in Sydney and Lismore. Forty new community members were trained as Rovers. On the field, Rovers identified 57 overdoses and worked with medical teams to support 93 community members experiencing distress and adverse health impacts.

ACON's AOD team conducted several presentations including at the National Centre for Clinical Research on Emerging Drugs (GHB, Harm Reduction and COVID-19); Harm Reduction International Conference Melbourne 2019 (ACON Rovers in the Nightclub); HIV and Related Programs Forum 2019 (ACON's NSP); and Central Eastern Sydney Primary Health Network, Re-Thinking Mental Health Forum 2019 (ACON's Rainbow Mental Health Lived Experience Network).

DOMESTIC & FAMILY VIOLENCE

WE'RE HERE TO HELP SEXUALITY AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE (DFV) BY PROVIDING A RANGE OF RESOURCES AND SUPPORT SERVICES.

DFV & COVID-19

Research tells us that natural disasters, including pandemics, lead to an increase in experiences of sexual, domestic and family violence (DFV), including for LGBTQ people.

In recognition of the needs of our community members and in response to COVID-19, we received \$200,000 in additional funding from the Australian Government's COVID-19 DFV support package. The funding, administered by Women NSW, will be used to provide direct support to LGBTQ people who have experienced sexual, domestic and family violence.

During the lockdown, ACON published blogs on DFV support for LGBTQ people during the pandemic on our DFV website, *Say It Out Loud*. In March and April, we saw a 278% increase in people accessing the online resource.

Our counselling and care coordination teams also saw an increase in clients presenting with sexual, domestic and family violence as a primary concern. We also provided consultation support to mainstream DFV services and the NSW Government.

SAY IT OUT LOUD: NATIONAL DFV DIGITAL RESOURCE

Funding from the Australian Department of Social Services has allowed ACON to expand its sexual, DFV website – sayitoutloud.org.au – broadening its focus and scope to include nationally relevant content and improved information and tools. Say It Out Loud aims to become a single source of information and support for sexuality and gender diverse community members across Australia, linking people to support services, as well as an opportunity to increase the capacity of services and professionals working with LGBTQ people.

In order to achieve this, we have partnered with a sexual, domestic and family violence service in each state. The new website now incorporates new features, tools and functions such as locally produced content, along with quizzes, a service mapping tool, a safety planning tool, and more.

'16 DAYS, 16 STORIES' AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

From 25 November to 10 December, organisations around the world mark 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence. The international campaign originated from the first Women's Global Leadership Institute coordinated by the Center for Women's Global Leadership in 1991. People and organisations are encouraged to mark the initiative through local campaigns or events. In 2019, ACON collated 16 stories of community members who had experienced violence to raise awareness about how gender-based violence affects our communities, and how we can take a stand against it. The campaign elicited strong engagement reaching over 22,500 people on Facebook.

VOICES FOR CHANGE

In 2019, ACON partnered with Domestic Violence NSW to form Queer Voices for Change: Media Advocacy to End Family Violence and Sexual Assault Project. This project provided opportunities for community members who had experienced violence to undertake advocacy, and it included free training on the research behind preventing DFV, advocacy and media engagement. DVNSW and ACON worked with media, community organisations and government departments to connect advocates with opportunities to share their stories. Through this project we have assisted members of the Queer Voices for Change project to share their stories on over 18 different occasions during the last year. The project helped to ensure that the voices of survivor advocates are heard and contribute to a more accurate and inclusive public discourse on intimate partner and family violence.

PROUD PARTNERS PROGRAM

In 2019 ACON ran Proud Partners, a 10-week group therapeutic program for LGBTQ community members who were concerned about their behaviours in a relationship such as a lack of respect, controlling conduct or aggression. The program demonstrated strong engagement, retention, outcomes and satisfaction amongst participants, with all attendees strongly agreeing that their relationships would be better as a result of the program.

ACON has been successful in securing funding from Women NSW to run the Proud Partners program in 2020-2022. Funding from Women NSW will also enable us to deliver survivor support groups, develop and deliver bystander community workshops and contribute to policy including implementation of the NSW Sexual Assault Strategy 2018-2021 and the writing of the next NSW DFV Strategy.

OTHER DFV PARTNERSHIPS & INITIATIVES

This year, ACON worked in partnership with three mainstream services working in sexual, domestic and family violence: Barnardos Western NSW, Marrickville Youth Resource Centre and Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia. ACON undertook a policy and practice reviews that included training, guidance with intake and assessment procedures, and assistance with policy development. This work builds on their inclusive service capacity for sexuality and gender diverse people who have experienced violence.

In May 2020, the Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) published a report developed in partnership with ACON and Relationships Australia NSW: *Developing LGBTQ programs for perpetrators and victims/survivors of domestic and family violence*. The report looks at the experiences of LGBTQ DFV perpetrators, victims and survivors, and explores how we can improve the recognition and understanding of LGBTQ intimate partner violence among mainstream organisation and service providers and within LGBTQ communities.

ACON continues to provide strategic advice and support to the NSW Government in relation to SFDV. In 2020, an ACON representative joined the Attorney General's Advisory Council, providing expert advice to the Attorney General on the experiences and needs of LGBTQ people experiencing or perpetrating violence. ACON has also provided feedback on key NSW Government plans, strategies, campaigns and reviews including the Women NSW Strategy, the second phase of the NSW sexual consent campaign and the outcomes of the NSW Blueprint for Reform.



HOME IS WHERE OUR STORY BEGINS

In collaboration with the NSW LGBTIQ Domestic and Family Violence Interagency and Western Sydney University researchers, we published the report *Home Is Where Our Story Begins: Family, community and belonging for sexuality and gender diverse CALD people* in May. This report looks at the lived experiences of sexuality and gender diverse people in Greater Western Sydney, who are also culturally and linguistically diverse, in relation to family and community relationships, and the marriage equality debate.

This report highlights the diversity of stories from community members in Western Sydney, including stories of support, others of family rejection and violence, and stories about struggles to feel connected to cultural identity and community.

This project was supported through a City of Parramatta Council Community Grant, and was launched in collaboration with the Bankstown Inclusive Communities Network at a virtual IDAHOBIT event, attended by more than 200 people.

The report attracted significant media attention, with over 160 media mentions, and shone a light on the important work currently happening in Western Sydney to address the needs of LGBTQ CALD community members.

Through the project a number of community organisations have engaged with the project to address issues raised in the report.

3

GIVING VOICE TO OUR COMMUNITY & STRENGTHENING INCLUSION

- 3.1 We ensure that ACON maintains meaningful involvement of people living with HIV, and ensures their strengths and concerns are shared with decision makers and the broader community.
- 3.2 We amplify the voices of those we serve to ensure that decision makers are working with us to create opportunities for our communities to live their healthiest lives.
- 3.3 We advocate for the meaningful inclusion, support and participation of our communities and the reduction of discrimination and stigma.
- 3.4 We build strong partnerships and exemplify and share best practice models for inclusion and participation.
- 3.5 We participate in and support research and strive for a strong evidence base to inform decisions made about our communities' health.

POLICY, STRATEGY & RESEARCH

WE'RE HERE TO WORK WITH LEGISLATORS, POLICYMAKERS, RESEARCHERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS TO HELP THEM UNDERSTAND AND ADDRESS THE HEALTH NEEDS OF SEXUALITY AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE, AND PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV.

COVID-19 & OUR COMMUNITIES: LGBTQ ONLINE FORUM

The advent of the coronavirus pandemic presented our communities with unique challenges. In order to provide sexuality and gender diverse people with accurate information on COVID-19, ACON hosted an online forum in April. Over 200 people logged in to hear from a range of health experts including Professor Andrew Grulich from The Kirby Institute, Positive Life NSW CEO Jane Costello, ACON President Justin Koonin, General Practitioner Dr Brad McKay and psychologist Julie Catt.

DRUG HARM REDUCTION & TREATMENT

In early 2020 ACON launched the *Drug Harm Reduction and Treatment: Opportunities to Improve Outcomes for our Communities* position paper. Produced in part to respond to the NSW Government's Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug Ice and to the findings of the NSW Coroner's Inquest into Deaths at Music Festivals, the paper outlined the use and impacts of illicit drugs in our communities. It detailed ACON's current drug service delivery offerings and policy activity, and highlighted areas of opportunities to improve the health outcomes for LGBTQ people in relation to substance use.

NSW SPECIAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ICE

ACON contributed a significant response to the NSW Special Commission of Inquiry into Ice and other Amphetamine Type Substances. This submission, which explored drug use in a harm minimisation framework, provided the Inquiry with information about our communities and the importance of holistic and person-centred models of care and support.

MANDATORY TESTING SUBMISSION

In late 2019 both the NSW Government and NSW Labor announced plans to introduce laws to enact mandatory disease testing for blood borne viruses (BBVs) for people whose bodily fluids come into contact with some emergency service workers in NSW. In response ACON partnered with key organisations in the HIV and other BBV sector to develop the position paper, *Let's Not Weaken the NSW Response to Managing Blood Borne Viruses*. In May 2020, ACON also provided feedback on the draft *Mandatory Disease Testing Bill 2020*. The submission outlined our strong opposition, stating that mandatory testing was in direct opposition to guidelines on BBV transmission, infringes on human rights and will exacerbate stigma and discrimination faced by people living with HIV and other BBVs.

HIV IN ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITIES

During Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HIV Awareness Week, ACON launched the discussion paper *HIV in the NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population*, exploring the impacts of HIV on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in NSW. It outlined a set of recommended actions the NSW Government and community sector could take to address disparities.

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY REPORT ON LGBTQ DFV

In partnership with Relationships Australia and the Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), the report *Developing LGBTQ Programs for Perpetrators and Victims/Survivors of Domestic and Family Violence*, was published, the result of years of planning and qualitative research and analysis. The report offers vital evidence that supports ACON's calls for tailored and culturally appropriate services for survivors and perpetrators of domestic and family violence in sexuality and gender diverse communities.

POLICY SUBMISSIONS & POSITION STATEMENTS

ACON's work in policy and advocacy continued across a range of issues. We offered submissions on religious freedoms legislation, consent and sexual assault, DFV, mental health and anti-discrimination legislation. Across all of this work, we endeavoured to bring the voices of our community to the decision makers. Our advocacy work continued to be strengthened by working with our key partners in the health and HIV sectors and be driven

by the ongoing need for equity in health care along with increased data collection.

RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

ACON continued supporting researchers through our Research Ethics Review Committee (RERC). The RERC provides researchers with practical feedback to ensure that research is conducted ethically and prevents potential harm to our communities. In 2019-2020, the RERC received 32 applications from researchers from across Australia. Projects that received RERC approval were also given the opportunity to deliver feedback sessions, with several research forums being held at ACON's offices or online over the last financial year, supporting a process of knowledge transfer and exchange between researchers, ACON staff and stakeholders.

SYDNEY GAY COMMUNITY PERIODIC SURVEY

Every year, ACON leads and coordinates participant recruitment for the Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey (SGCPS). Delivered in partnership between ACON, the Centre for Social Research in Health (UNSW), The Kirby Institute, Positive Life NSW and the NSW Ministry of Health, the SGCPS is an annual cross-sectional survey of gay men and other MSM recruited from a range of community sites in Sydney and online throughout NSW. The aim of the survey is to provide data on sexual activity, drug use, testing practices related to the transmission of HIV and other STIs, and PrEP use among the gay community.

This year, ACON deployed more than 30 community members as Survey Participant Recruiters to engage respondents across 21 sites over 12 days in the lead up to the 2020



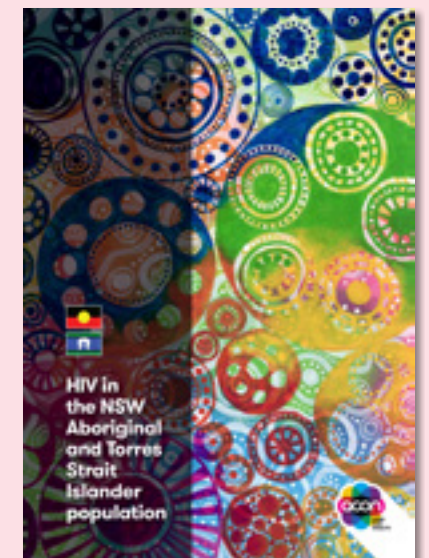
Photography: Reg Domingo

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade. Over 3000 gay men and other men who have sex with men participated in the survey.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT & DATA COLLECTION

ACON maintains Quality Accreditation by regularly undertaking a review of our systems and practices to ensure we continue to improve in the areas of Governance, Management Systems, Consumer and Community Engagement, Diversity and Cultural Appropriateness, and Service Delivery.

With the pandemic impacting the delivery of ACON's work, the collection of data and the measurement of ACON's performance was more important than ever. This year, data collection was focused on the Ministry of Health key performance indicators (KPI), collecting data for the Board and Senior Management, the Reconciliation Action Plan KPI report and the expansion of the client database 'Penelope' to include peer education and regional outreach programs.



SAFETY & SOCIAL INCLUSION

WE'RE HERE TO HELP SEXUALITY AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION, AND TO HELP IMPROVE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF OUR COMMUNITY BY PROVIDING INFORMATION AND A RANGE OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO GAY & TRANSGENDER HATE CRIMES BETWEEN 1970 AND 2010

ACON continued to participate in the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into historic hate crimes between 1970 and 2010. Following an initial submission phase and hearing between September 2018 and February 2019, the Inquiry was re-opened in October 2019. ACON worked to support further community input during the second round of the Inquiry by running an awareness campaign on social media and collaborating with Dowson Turco Lawyers and other stakeholders in promoting engagement. ACON provided support to more than 15 people in making submissions. ACON also made a second comprehensive submission to the inquiry. ACON was invited to give further evidence at the second round of hearings, set for March 2020, but this was delayed due to the pandemic. ACON will continue to use the inquiry to advocate for justice outcomes for victims and their loved ones as well as systemic improvements to facilitate better responses to hate crimes.

'BONDI BADLANDS' HISTORICAL VIOLENCE WALKING TOURS

As part of continuing efforts to raise awareness of historical LGBTQ violence and to provide broader context of the Bondi Memorial Project for the community and local residents, ACON has hosted a number of walking tours through Marks Park, Tamarama. The tours are run by journalist and author Greg Callaghan and are based on his

book *Bondi Badlands*. During the walk, Callaghan explores a time when an epidemic of anti-LGBTQ violence swept through Sydney, through the stories of four gay men who lost their lives in Marks Park. In the process Callaghan provides an insight into the broader impact of violence against LGBTQ people in NSW. Walking tours are ongoing and a companion podcast is currently in development.

'OUR BLOOD RUNS IN THE STREET'

To raise further awareness of achieving justice and healing for historical crimes against LGBTQ people, ACON partnered with local arts company Chopt Logic to support the development of a verbatim theatre work that drew on interviews with key community and expert representatives. The production, *Our Blood Runs in the Street*, presented an informative and unapologetic look at how cultural prejudice and bias contributed to violence against gay and transgender people in Australia. Significant interest was shown in the production, including a community launch, which ran for three weeks in February and March 2020 at the Old Fitz Theatre in Woolloomooloo, before being interrupted by the pandemic.

THE WELCOME HERE PROJECT

We continued to help businesses and services demonstrate their support for diversity and inclusion with the Welcome Here Project. Since its re-launch in 2018 – the Welcome Here Project is a revamp of the Safe Place Program – over 3,000 members have

signed up to receive Welcome Here collateral. Thousands of business and services such as cafes, supermarkets, bars, restaurants, galleries and banks now proudly display Welcome Here stickers, which signals their commitment to provide a welcoming space for sexuality and gender diverse people.

WESTERN SYDNEY

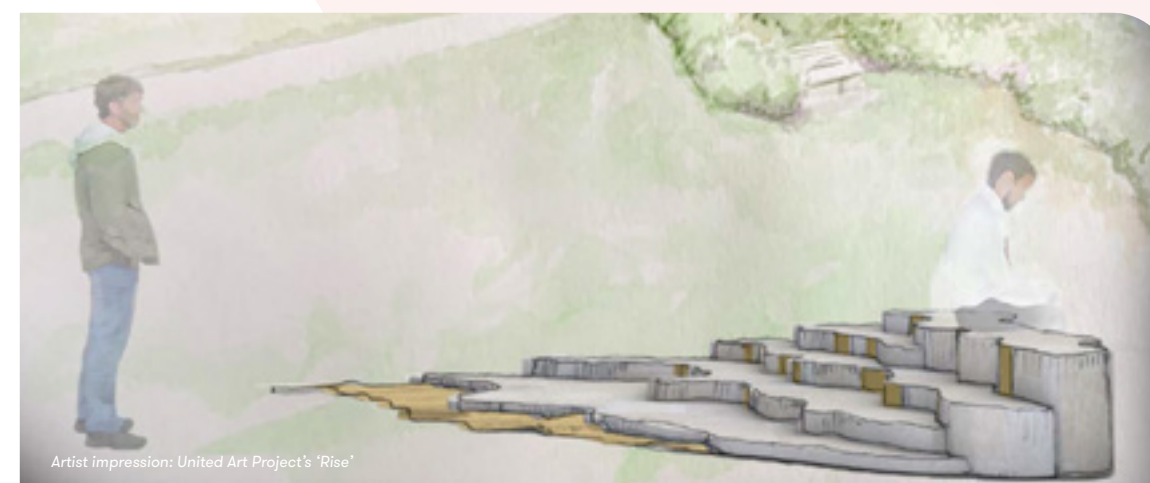
We continued to support sexuality and gender diverse communities in Western Sydney to improve their health and wellbeing, as well as develop capacity of mainstream organisations. Activities included

participation in local LGBTQ inclusion networks including Canterbury-Bankstown and Macarthur Wingecarribee, involvement in the development of the report *Home Is Where Our Story Begins*, which explores the experiences of LGBTQ people in CALD communities in Greater Western Sydney following the same-sex marriage vote in 2017, and the Parramatta Pride Picnic, which saw 3,000 people descend on the Parramatta River foreshore in October last year for a day of pride, solidarity and celebration.

To gain a deeper insight on the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ

people in Western Sydney, ACON, in partnership with Western Sydney University, conducted extensive community and stakeholder consultations in September last year. The outcomes of this will be published in a report to inform the development of advocacy, training and other service-related initiatives.

The study is part of a three-year project funded by the NSW Ministry of Health and overseen by South East Sydney LHD that will provide an important resource for Western Sydney, health and community sectors, and inform ACON's upcoming work.



BONDI MEMORIAL PROJECT

Since 2016, ACON has been working in partnership with Waverley Council to construct a monument in Marks Park, Tamarama, to honour the lives of people impacted by historical anti-LGBTQ violence.

Following an open tender process and community consultation involving six shortlisted concepts, 'Rise' by United Art Projects was selected as the final design for the public artwork. Over 520 community members participated in the online consultation process and the final design was endorsed by council in September this year.

The design selection marks a significant milestone for the Bondi Memorial Project, which aims to bring awareness, healing and justice to victims, families, survivors and the LGBTQ community who experienced prejudice related violence between the 1970s and 1990s.

ACON is grateful for the commitment of Waverley Council, who have committed \$100,000 towards the project, as well as the philanthropic donation of Stephen Heasley and Andrew Borg, who contributed over \$60,000. Construction will commence in 2020-2021.

Photography: Waverley Council/UAP Projects

TRANS & GENDER DIVERSE HEALTH

WE'RE HERE TO HELP TRANS PEOPLE OF ALL GENDERS - BINARY AND NON-BINARY - TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR HEALTH.



Photography: Jamie James, ACON, Trans Pride Australia, Cassidy Judy

This year we continued to address the health and wellbeing needs of trans and gender diverse people by delivering on key commitments outlined in the *Blueprint for Improving the Health and Wellbeing of the Trans and Gender Diverse Community in NSW*.

We know trans people are resilient but continue to experience significant disparities across almost every area of life in NSW and Australia. This can include violence, stigma and discrimination in healthcare settings, at home, in public, through the media, at work and at school. Trans people also continue to face

substantial barriers when seeking gender affirming healthcare, such as accessing hormones and surgical interventions. These experiences can lead to trans and gender diverse people experiencing disproportionate mental health impacts.

Over the last year, ACON has implemented a range of initiatives to improve the health and wellbeing of trans and gender diverse people.

TRANSHUB TALKS

In support of the launch of TransHub, ACON's Trans Health Equity team conducted interviews with over a

dozen community members for the *TransHub Talks* video series.

The series discusses issues from accessing healthcare to trans embodiment and gender euphoria as told by trans people themselves. For many participants, it was the first time they'd been interviewed by another trans person, leading to an open and genuine conversation.

trans[TEST]

During 2019/2020, in partnership with the Kirketon Road Centre, ACON launched Trans[TEST], a peer-led rapid HIV and STI testing service

offering trans people additional access to sexual health screening, resources and information.

We know that compared to the general population, trans people are confronted with substantial obstacles when accessing basic healthcare. There are various reasons why trans people may not feel comfortable in sexual health services and other health environments such as concerns over being misgendered or being treated disrespectfully.

POLICY & ADVOCACY

Throughout the year, we developed and contributed to numerous policy and advocacy initiatives related to the inclusion of trans and gender diverse people. These included the advocacy for and gender diverse people in the COVID-19 response, improving access to gender affirming healthcare, education for gender affirming clinicians and the broader health system, and strengthening research and data collection. Other areas of focus were improving the experiences of trans and gender diverse people at work, in sport, in the justice system, those that were experiencing homelessness and Medicare ineligible, as well as ongoing advocacy toward legal gender recognition for those with NSW birth certificates.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

We have continued to work closely with trans leaders, groups and organisations across NSW to support a strong, connected and resilient trans community. Over the last year we have developed community resources in partnership with Trans Pride Australia, supported numerous community initiatives and activities from conferences, art projects, podcasts, writing groups, photoshoots, events, research endeavours and advocacy activities. We were also able to promote community activities for Trans Day of Remembrance, Trans Awareness Week and Trans Day of Visibility.

In addition to building TransHub, we refreshed our *Trans and Strong* resilience resource and *Trans Inclusion Language Guide*, established a take-over initiative of the TransHub Instagram account and continue to support education initiatives that improve and strengthen the experiences of trans people accessing healthcare.



TRANSHUB

This year, we launched *TransHub*, a world-leading and award-winning platform for trans and gender diverse people across NSW, their supporters, and allies.

Work on the resource began shortly after the release of our landmark trans and gender diverse health strategy, *Blueprint for Improving the Health and Wellbeing of the Trans and Gender Diverse Community in NSW*. One of its key priority areas was that trans people experience harm when they aren't able to access appropriate information, particularly in relation to gender affirmation and health.

TransHub was launched on International Trans Day of Visibility on 31 March. The online platform includes accurate, evidence-based and accessible information to support the health of trans people, including information about COVID-19, social, medical and legal gender affirmation, sexual and reproductive health, mental health, cancer screening, substance use, domestic violence and rights.

TransHub is written by, for, and about trans and gender diverse people. ACON collaborated with as many different trans people and other stakeholders as possible in bringing *TransHub* to life.



HEALTHY AGEING

LOVE PROJECT

Established in 2013, ACON's LOVE Project (Living Older Visibly & Engaged) continues to provide support for older LGBTQ people through a range of programs and events. The project works to improve the health and wellbeing of older LGBTQ community members by providing social opportunities, creating understanding about healthy ageing issues and encouraging people to maintain healthy lifestyles. Among the initiatives delivered in 2019-2020 were Afternoon Delight, LOVE Club, and a resource on Living with HIV & Navigating Aged Care.

WE'RE HERE TO OFFER SUPPORT, COMPANIONSHIP AND ADVICE FOR OLDER SEXUALITY AND GENDER DIVERSE COMMUNITY MEMBERS BY PROVIDING HEALTH INFORMATION AND A RANGE OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

LOVE CLUB

Following its launch in 2019, the LOVE Club grew from strength to strength. The monthly gathering for older LGBTQ people and their supporters and friends attracted strong attendance and engagement. Activities included community members sharing lived experiences and stories, supporting physical and emotional wellbeing, field trips, inter-generational conversations and guest speakers from allied health services. LOVE Club aims to build and maintain connections, established support networks and reduce social isolation. As a result of the pandemic, LOVE Club pivoted to a virtual weekly

format to provide a safe social space for seniors to check in with each other.

AFTERNOON DELIGHT

Afternoon Delight is ACON's premier annual calendar event for LGBTQ seniors and their friends. Hosted by ACON's LOVE Project, this event screens three short films and a feature film that reflects the lived experiences of older community members. Afternoon Delight provides a safe and welcoming environment to come together for a day of entertainment, refreshments and social contact. In its 11th year, Afternoon Delight was presented in

partnership with Uniting and Seniors Rights Service, and supported by Queer Screen, the NSW Nurses and Midwives Association and LGBTQ+ Funerals. Screenings and afternoon teas were held in Sydney and regional centres including Wagga Wagga, Newcastle, Lismore, Katoomba and Sawtell.

COMMUNITY VISITORS SCHEME

Launched in 2015, our Community Visitors Scheme, funded by the Australian Government, continues to provide much-needed social support to older members of the community experiencing loneliness or isolation. Throughout the year, trained volunteers make regular one-on-one visits to homes of older LGBTQ people, delivering social interaction through a range of activities – whether it's a cup of tea, listening to music, sharing stories, watching a movie or participating in a game or hobby. Thirty-two LGBTQ people over the age of 50 living in their own homes were supported by 27 volunteers. A further 36 clients living in residential aged care were regularly visited by volunteers providing social support and connection to the community.



LIVING WITH HIV & NAVIGATING AGED CARE RESOURCE

To support HIV positive community members entering the aged care system, we produced *Living with HIV and Navigating Aged Care*, a useful resource which provides information on Australia's aged care health system and explores issues relevant to older people living with HIV. It outlines steps that can be taken to improve their transition into aged care and other useful tips on planning for the future such as wills, and government assistance.

SUPPORT FOR LGBTQ PEOPLE DEALING WITH PALLIATIVE CARE

Funding from the NSW Ministry of Health has enabled ACON to develop a resource to support sexuality and gender diverse community members with end of life and palliative care. The \$90,000 grant delivered under the NSW Health End of Life and Palliative Care Strategy 2019-2024 will go toward the development of a toolkit designed to provide LGBTQ people with the knowledge, skills and confidence to have end-of-life discussions and make palliative care plans.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

This year, ACON has been funded to work with LGBTQ people with disability.

In partnership with People with Disability Australia, ACON has been developing an online toolkit that aims to enable and empower LGBTQ people with disability to understand and navigate the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), to have

the information they need to make decisions and choices along with the skills and confidence to self-advocate for their individual needs.

The toolkit – *Queer Ability: An NDIS Guide for LGBTQ People* – has been co-designed by a group of community members with disability. It features both online and print resources, and short video clips of

community members sharing their experiences. Further funding by the National Disability Insurance Agency will allow ACON to roll out the toolkit in a series of workshops across NSW over the next two years. In addition, ACON will run a train-the-trainer course for professionals across the country who are wanting to roll out the toolkit workshops in their state.

Afternoon Delight at Event Cinemas in Sydney

REGIONAL NSW

WE'RE HERE TO HELP SEXUALITY AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE, AND PEOPLE WITH HIV IN REGIONAL NSW TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR HEALTH BY PROVIDING A RANGE OF LOCAL SERVICES AND SUPPORTING A VARIETY OF LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS. WE HAVE OFFICES IN THE NORTHERN RIVERS AND HUNTER REGIONS, WITH OUTREACH SERVICES OPERATING ACROSS WESTERN AND SOUTHERN NSW.



ACON Rovers at Tropical Fruits NYE Party at Lismore Showgrounds

Our regional teams engage with community members and people living with HIV in providing care coordination and counselling services, delivering health promotion campaigns, undertaking community development and peer education initiatives, supporting community groups and events, providing training and support to mainstream services, and providing access to needle and syringe programs. Our regional teams also provide face-to-face and off-site counselling via phone and video.

ACON NORTHERN RIVERS

ACON Northern Rivers works with sexuality and gender diverse communities, partners and services throughout the Northern NSW and the Mid North Coast local health districts. The team works out of Lismore and conducts outreach covering the Northern Rivers region – from Tweed Heads in the north to Coffs Harbour in the south and out to Drake in the west. Among the highlights this year were:

- Delivering ACON's HIV prevention campaigns and sexual health messages at local events throughout the Northern Rivers and the Mid North Coast.
- Supporting the annual Tropical Fruits NYE Festival with a range of health promotion activities including HIV and STI screening on the festival campgrounds and coordinating ACON Rovers to provide harm reduction services at various festival events. We also distributed resources throughout the festival, providing safe sex packs and health promotion posters and fans.
- Partnering with HARP and Bulgar Ngaru Aboriginal Medical Service to co-host a symposium during Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander HIV Awareness Week on 2 December 2019. ACON provided in-kind support and speakers included Associate Professor James Ward, Dr Chris Bourne, Michelle Tobin and speakers from Positive Life NSW's Positive Speakers Bureau program. Over 40 participants from health, community services and Aboriginal community organisations across the region attended the event.
- Implementing a needs analysis survey for gay, bisexual, trans and queer men in the Northern Rivers regions – with a focus on men living with HIV. The survey, open between April and May 2020, drew 54 responses with the data to be used to inform service planning and development.
- Relocating the ACON Northern Rivers office to new premises. After 20 years of operation in Uralba Street, ACON Northern Rivers moved to its new home in Conway Street in the Lismore CBD. The new premises features an open-plan office, counselling rooms, a large meeting room, utilities rooms and a staff room. With extra space and a convenient location, the new accommodation provides community members with greater access and utility.

Photography: Deep Field Photography



ACON Rovers, Tradies, staff and volunteers at the Tropical Fruits camping ground at Lismore Showgrounds



ACON at Koori Knockout in Tuggerah



ACON at the Deni Ute Muster in Deniliquin



ACON at Central Coast Pride's Coastal Twist

ACON HUNTER

Based in Newcastle, ACON Hunter works with partner and service organisations throughout the Hunter New England, Central Coast and Western NSW Local Health Districts. Among the highlights this year were:

- Delivering ACON's HIV prevention campaigns and sexual health messages at local events throughout the Hunter, New England, Central Coast and Western NSW.
- Partnering with Hunter New England Sexual Health to deliver HIV and STI testing at Newcastle Pride Festival Fair Day in August. We completed 41 HIV and STI screens and provided over 690 interactions on HIV and sexual health. We distributed safe sex packs and other education resources throughout the day and at various other festival events.
- Supporting the inaugural Central Coast Pride's Coastal Twist Festival as well as the inaugural Tamworth Pride Fair Day, both held during the 2019 October long weekend. We delivered health promotion information and resources at both events.
- Teaming up with the Hepatitis NSW and the Sex Workers Outreach Project to deliver health promotion information and resources at the 2019 Koori Knockout in October in Tuggerah on the Central Coast.
- Collaborating with the Newcastle Museum in hosting the AIDS Quilt Exhibition and morning tea commemorating World AIDS Day.
- Continuing to deliver education and training to local service providers working with our communities. We delivered 14 education sessions to 144 participants to service providers supporting key priority groups.

Photography: Kage Goldt; Josef Garrington

SOUTHERN, FAR WEST, NEPEAN & BLUE MOUNTAINS OUTREACH

ACON's Regional Outreach team works with partners and services throughout the Illawarra Shoalhaven, Southern NSW, Nepean Blue Mountains, Murrumbidgee, Albury Wodonga and Far West Local Health Districts. Among the highlights this year were:

- Delivering ACON's HIV prevention campaigns and sexual health messages at local events throughout the southern and far west regions on NSW.
- Distributing ACON resources and other sexual health education collateral to over 180 services and organisations in the southern and far west regions including sexual health centres, Aboriginal health services, university campuses, medical centres, GP surgeries, primary health centres, local health districts, youth services, councils, festivals, women's centres, community hubs, pubs and clubs.
- Over the year, we distributed over 20,000 safe sex packs to community events, organisations and venues in the Southern and Far West regions of NSW.

- Partnering with the Far West Local Health District to provide on-site rapid HIV testing and STI screening at the Broken Hill Festival in Broken Hill in September. We completed 45 HIV and STI tests, provided sexual health information, and distributed over 3000 safe sex packs and other resources over the three-day festival.
- Hosting a HIV awareness, safe sex and community safety stall at Deni Ute Muster in Deniliquin in October 2019. Over the two-day festival, ACON distributed over 2000 safe sex packs and engaged with festivalgoers from all over rural NSW on HIV and sexual health.
- Delivering World AIDS Day to bring communities together and to raise awareness of HIV. Events included film screenings in Albury and Wagga Wagga, and drag events in Broken Hill.
- Supporting local events with health promotion, information and resources including Viva La Gong and NAIDOC Week in Wollongong, and Queer Fusion Festival in Port Kembla.





ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs at the Sydney Mardi Gras Parade 2020



ACON's Pride In Practice Conference in Sydney

PRIDE INCLUSION PROGRAMS

WE'RE HERE TO HELP MAKE THE PLACES WHERE OUR COMMUNITY MEMBERS LIVE, WORK, STUDY, PLAY AND HEAL MORE INCLUSIVE OF PEOPLE OF DIVERSE SEXUALITIES AND GENDERS.

ACON'S PRIDE INCLUSION PROGRAMS

ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs comprise a suite of national support programs specifically designed to assist Australian employers, sporting organisations and service providers move from LGBTQ awareness, to competence and eventually, leading practice.

Pride in Diversity works with Australian

employers to be an employer of choice for LGBTQ employees. Pride in Sport works with sporting bodies, coaches, participants, teams and athletes to be fully inclusive and welcoming of LGBTQ people. Pride in Health + Wellbeing works with organisations in the health, wellbeing and human services sectors to ensure that the services they offer are welcoming, inclusive and that their teams are aware of the health needs within our community.

Each program offers expertise, a world-class national benchmarking process and the opportunity to participate in best practice roundtables, executive ally programs, training, conferences, discussion boards and national surveys while providing year-round subject matter expertise, on-call relationship management and the opportunity to participate in initiatives alongside other leading member organisations.

This year we were challenged by COVID-19 but responded both quickly and strategically by producing an additional 'value-add' range of online speakers' series, training programs, seminars and data presentations across all programs. The uptake has been extraordinary, and we believe, is one of the key reasons we have been able to retain engagement with our members.

PRIDE IN DIVERSITY

As we celebrate 10 years of Pride in Diversity in 2020, we can proudly say that our membership program and national benchmarking tool has been the critical driver for LGBTQ workplace inclusion here in Australia. By the end of financial year 2019/2020, Pride in Diversity membership closed at 311, a growth of 12% on last year with an overall employee reach of over 3 million.

In addition to the ongoing support we provide to members, we have retained our focus on several key strategic initiatives: LGBTQ Women, Regional Reach, Intersectionality: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse/LGBTQ people, Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander LGBTQ employees and Recruitment Challenges, and practices for Trans/Gender Diverse Employees. In alignment with these initiatives, we have this year produced two publications: *Intersections at Work – Understanding the experience of culturally diverse LGBTQ Talent* (a joint publication between Pride in Diversity and Diversity Council Australia) and *Regional Inclusion – A How To Guide*.

Also worth noting is the expansive growth of the Executive Allies forum, where executives across Australian employer organisations can meet

to understand their role in inclusion, ask questions, hear each other's stories, seek advice and gain a better understanding of LGBTQ workplace inclusion. This forum currently has a membership of 135 executives from across the country.

PRIDE IN SPORT

Pride in Sport works with national and state sporting organisations as well as university sports, professional and amateur teams to increase LGBTQ inclusion within Australian Sport.

At the end of the 2019/2020 financial year, Pride in Sport membership closed at 20, an increase of approximately 25% from the preceding year.

Relationships and partnerships were established, both internationally and locally – the most notable being with

Sport Australia, the governing body for sport in Australia.

Pride in Sport also delivered several community engagement initiatives, including supporting the Pride Football Tournament in Melbourne, and hosting a Wear It Purple morning tea in Sydney featuring special guest Andy Brennan, who spoke about his experiences as an openly gay athlete.

Pride in Sport was also instrumental in assisting sporting bodies with the development of their trans and gender diverse inclusion policies.

Pride in Sport's social media reach has grown significantly this year exceeding 50,000 engagements a month, with 4,500 followers across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn.

PRIDE IN HEALTH + WELLBEING

Pride in Health + Wellbeing is a national membership program that provides personalised support to health and wellbeing organisations to assist them become more inclusive of LGBTQ people and improve the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ communities. The program provides 1:1 mentorship, training and advice on embedding LGBTQ inclusion throughout all aspects of the member organisation.

This year the program launched a comprehensive website and a suite of new resource materials. The advisory group was refreshed, and a series of online educational sessions were made available to members.

At the end of the 2019/2020 financial year, Pride in Health + Wellbeing

membership closed at 27, an increase of 28.5%.

NATIONAL BENCHMARKING INDICES

All three Pride Inclusion Programs run national benchmarking indices to track shifts in Australian practices towards greater inclusivity of LGBTQ people.

One-hundred and fifty-five Australian employers this year participated in the Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI), the national benchmarking program measuring LGBTQ inclusion within Australian workplaces. The accompanying survey saw a response rate of 33,572, our highest to date.

Thirty-eight sporting organisations participated in the Pride in Sport Index (PSI) an increase of 111%

and for the first time, we were able to capture enough responses within the accompanying survey to produce data metrics and benchmarking. Survey responses closed at 1396, a significant increase from 14 last year.

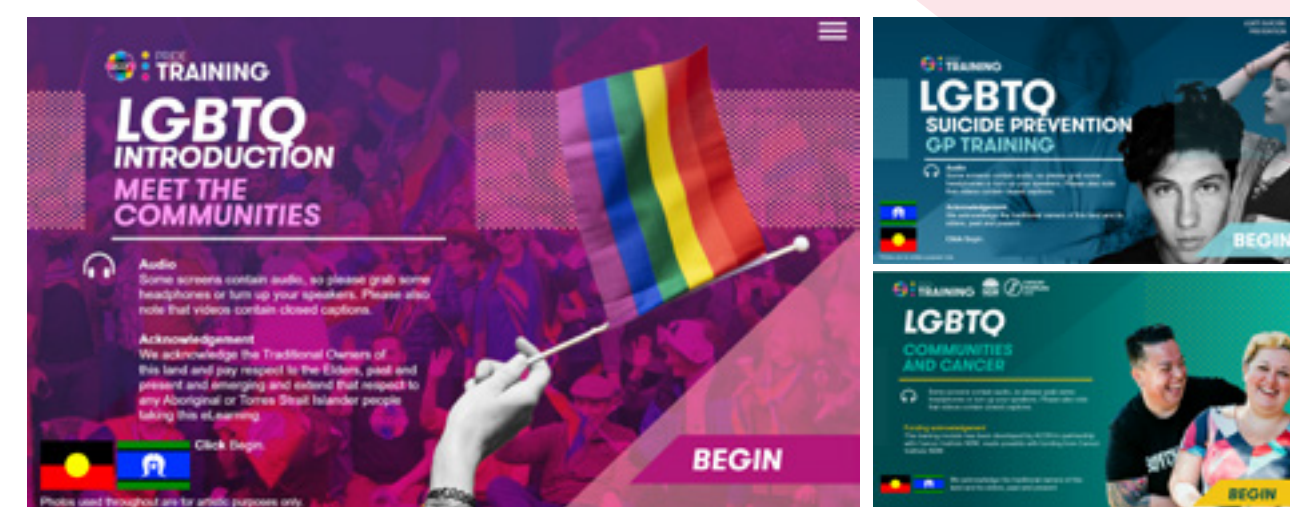
Nine health and wellbeing service providers participated in the Health and Wellbeing Equality Index (HWEI) this year, the same number that

participated last year. However, given that the survey was due at the time of the pandemic and many of these organisations were involved in the response, this was not unexpected.

Awards events celebrate excellence in score achievement or individual award nominations each year. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 these had to be moved into the next financial year.

PRIDE IN PRACTICE CONFERENCE

While the annual Pride in Practice Conference gears mostly towards LGBTQ workplace inclusion, this year's conference focused streams that targeted both sports and health and wellbeing service providers. Held in Sydney in late 2019, this three-day conference attracted just under 300 people a day.



TRAINING & CONSULTANCY

Pride Training is ACON's training and consultancy service that assists professionals, organisations and service providers on sexuality and gender diverse inclusion and awareness. Through customised learning programs and training sessions, participants learn to understand the differences between sex, gender, identity, gender expression and sexual orientation, experiences of health disparities and how to be inclusive and responsive to LGBTQ people.

Throughout the year, Pride Training hosted 96 training sessions (in

person and webinar), facilitating to 1,895 professionals in the health and wellbeing, university, legal, tech, and community sectors. Across our offerings, we recorded a 90% satisfaction rating.

We also had 634 learners complete a variety of eLearning modules. LGBTQ Introduction eLearning is available for organisations to licence reaching another 3,800 health professionals. Utilising GOTO Training for our Webinar series, we were able to bring many of our in-person sessions online, in response to the pandemic.

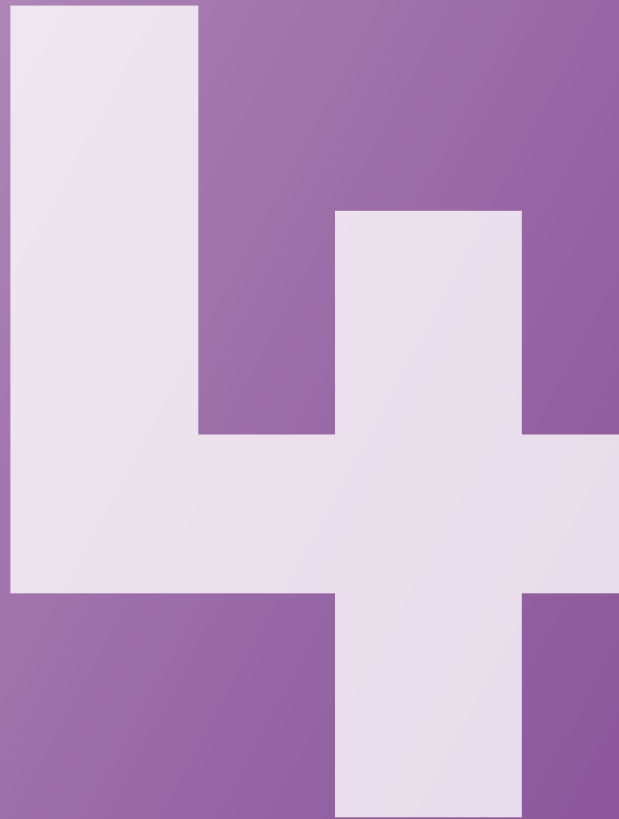
Other highlights of the year include:

- In partnership with The Cancer Institute of NSW we developed an eLearning on Inclusive Cancer Services for the staff of the Cancer Institute, BreastScreen NSW, and QuitLine.
- Women NSW funded the development of an Inclusive Responses to Sexual Assault eLearning for frontline emergency and SDFV workers across NSW.
- LGBTQ Suicide Prevention for GPs was approved by the RACGP and launched.



ACON's Pride in Sport Wear It Purple Breakfast in Sydney

Photography: David Alexander



DEVELOPING FINANCIAL DIVERSITY, STRENGTH & GROWTH

- 4.1 We ensure that the health of our communities is a funded priority in mainstream health provision.
- 4.2 We deliver bold and exciting revenue generation activities that appeal to our communities.
- 4.3 We ensure diversification of our income sources to ensure that we can deliver against the health needs of our communities which may be underfunded.
- 4.4 We make prudent decisions about investing our resources, and ensure that these investments are ethically sound.
- 4.5 We endeavour to find efficiencies in spending and source talent and resources which are cost effective while upholding the standards of our organisation.

FINANCIAL DIVERSITY, STRENGTH & GROWTH



WE'RE HERE TO BUILD ACON'S FINANCIAL DIVERSITY, STRENGTH AND GROWTH. WE DO THIS THROUGH SOUND FINANCIAL PLANNING, DIVERSIFYING INCOME STREAMS, INNOVATIVE FUNDRAISING, AND STRONG RISK MANAGEMENT AND COMPLIANCE.

FINANCE

2019-2020 has been a challenging year for ACON with the COVID-19 pandemic impacting on operations. Demand for ACON's services increased while at the same time it was necessary to adapt our service delivery mechanisms to ensure the safety of clients, staff and volunteers. While there was a financial impact on fundraising, events and membership, this was offset to some extent by the Australian Government subsidies in relation to the pandemic.

ACON continued to pursue further revenue through government grants

at national, state and local levels, as well as through philanthropic organisations, with a degree of significant success.

In these challenging times, ACON continues to actively pursue diversifying our income streams, monitoring current income and expenditure, as well as following prudent investment strategies to ensure that any available funds are working to the advantage of ACON and our communities.

ACON is also continuing to reinvest income that is self-generated through fee-for-service offerings such as Pride

Inclusion Programs, Pride Training and the soon to be launched Pride Counselling to ensure continued growth of these programs. These programs operate independently of government and the funds generated through these services allow ACON to expand the reach and impact of our programs and services to our communities, as well as achieve our strategic goals.

RISK MANAGEMENT & COMPLIANCE

ACON promotes and supports a culture of effective risk management in all its strategic and daily

operational activities, complying with its responsibilities and striving for leading practice.

The effective risk assessment and management of risk underpins ACON's governance framework. The risk management framework is informed by the principles and guidelines articulated in the Australian Risk Management Standard (AS/NZS ISO 31000:2018).

ACON's framework includes policies, procedures, guidelines and operational tools to support informed decision making for the management of risks. ACON has an

organisation-wide risk register, which is reviewed at all meetings of the Finance & Audit Committee and the Board.

ACON also has in place an effective compliance framework to ensure compliance with its responsibilities under all relevant laws and regulations.

FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

ACON has a Finance and Audit Committee (the Committee) which is responsible, on behalf of the company, for assuring that ACON's



FUNDRAISING & PHILANTHROPY

ACON IS COMMITTED TO FINDING INNOVATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE WAYS TO CONTINUE FUNDING OUR WORK. THIS YEAR, WE FOCUSED ON DEVELOPING OUR DIGITAL FUNDRAISING SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES TO FURTHER ENHANCE OUR SUPPORTERS' EXPERIENCE.

DIGITAL FUNDRAISING & THE RED RIBBON APPEAL

The Red Ribbon Appeal is ACON's biggest and most iconic fundraising campaign. Held in the lead up to, and on, World AIDS Day, it allows us to remember those we have lost to an AIDS-related illness, educate others on HIV and raise money for programs and services that are vital to our HIV prevention and support efforts.

This year, we focused on developing peer-to-peer fundraising opportunities, and encouraging supporters to get involved with the campaign by fundraising their own way. We implemented a new fundraising online platform to foster greater participation to the Appeal. As a result, we saw an increase in online donations compared to 2018/2019. Funds raised online represented 51% of total revenue, the first time it has surpassed face-to-face fundraising.

Key to the success and sustainability of the Red Ribbon Appeal is the development of digital fundraising. With new digital infrastructure in place, we will work towards continuing to build our online fundraising capabilities.

In addition, Red Ribbon Appeal activities were held in Sydney and regional NSW – ranging from theatre productions, film screenings, art exhibitions and

community gatherings. Hundreds of volunteers supported our street-based fundraising drive, selling red ribbon merchandise and collecting donations at train stations and community hubs in the Sydney CBD and Inner West, as well as regional centres such as Lismore and Newcastle. Across our own events, as well as others we supported, we raised over \$78,000.

EVENT FUNDRAISING: HONOUR AWARDS

First held in 2007, the Honour Awards is an annual event produced by ACON that celebrates outstanding contributions and achievements within NSW's LGBTQ community. Held this year at the Ivy Ballroom in Sydney, the Awards is also a gala fundraiser for ACON. More than 350 people attended the event to honour the work of those making a difference in the lives of LGBTQ people in NSW.

This year, nine individuals and organisations were selected as winners from a diverse field of 140 nominations and 34 finalists. Wagga resident and local trans icon Holly Conroy was named Community Hero, while Robert French and Julie McCrossin were both given the prestigious ACON President's Award in recognition of their pioneering work in LGBTQ rights and equality.

This year, attendance at our Honour Awards was up 11% to 360 people, with the event raising \$71,000.

BRINGING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER AND RAISING FUNDS FOR ACON: BINGAY

This year, ACON's long-running community fundraiser, Bingay, marked its 20th anniversary. It is currently held monthly at The Beresford in Surry Hills. This year, Bingay also took place at various

corporate events and festivals including Colour The Streets in Barangaroo, Clayton Utz, ARUP and as part of Broadway Shopping Centre's 2020 Mardi Gras program.

In 2019/2020, Bingay delivered strong results until it was suspended by the pandemic. Up until March, Bingay yielded over \$41,000, which is on par with budget projections and the previous year.

We thank our communities for their continued support for Bingay.

PLANNED GIVING & LEGACY GIFTS

ACON is grateful to be the recipient of planned donations and legacy gifts. In 2019/2020, we received over \$17,000 in donations by regular donors. We thank everyone who made a generous donation to ACON over the past 12 months.

In 2019/2020, ACON received over \$371,000 in bequests. We thank the people and organisations who generously bequeathed contributions to ACON, which will help us continue our work in supporting the health and wellbeing of sexuality and gender diverse people and people with HIV.

FUNDRAISING PARTNERSHIPS

This year, we continued to grow our valued relationships with local businesses and corporate partners.

ACON is grateful to be the beneficiary of a range of fundraising events and philanthropic donations by businesses and organisations including Facebook, Microsoft, IKEA, Darlinghurst Business Partnership, Merivale, Solotel, Surry Hills Creative Precinct, Lotus Dining Group, Universal Hotels, Stonewall Hotel and Grill'd Crown Street.

organisational culture, capabilities, systems and processes are appropriate to protect the financial health and the reputation of ACON in all audit-related areas.

More particularly, the Committee reviews the financial reporting processes, the system of internal controls, risk management and the audit process, and ACON's process for monitoring and ensuring full compliance with laws and regulations.

It monitors ACON's internal and external auditors' findings and recommendations with regard to ACON's capability and performance in all audit areas, ensuring that appropriate corrective actions are taken when deficiencies are identified.

It also acts as ACON's Investment Advisory Committee, ensuring ACON's resources are properly utilised to maximise returns, while

managing risk within the parameters approved by the Board.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PRO BONO ASSISTANCE

During the course of ACON's operations, it is often necessary to seek the advice and guidance of specialist legal organisations in matters such as commercial law and intellectual property.

We gratefully acknowledge the pro bono support provided during 2019/2020 by the following legal advisers:

- Baker McKenzie
- K&L Gates
- Norton Rose Fulbright

The assistance provided by these organisations has been invaluable in assisting ACON achieve its strategic goals and further our work in our communities.



5

BUILDING A WORKPLACE THAT ATTRACTS & DEVELOPS THE BEST PEOPLE

- 5.1 We create opportunities for staff and volunteers to develop their skills, ensuring a passionate, authentic and committed team.
- 5.2 We provide a positive working environment in which staff and volunteers feel supported and justly recognised for the work they do.
- 5.3 We are committed to creating an effective, efficient and healthy workplace, which will best serve our clients and communities.
- 5.4 We develop strategic responses to ensure that staff and volunteers who are living with HIV, trans and gender diverse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse or living with a disability are supported towards excellence.
- 5.5 We foster an environment of respect in which staff and volunteers feel supported to provide and receive feedback on their work.



ACON staff at ACON's annual staff learning and development conference, Big Days In

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

WE'RE HERE TO BUILD ACON'S OPERATIONAL CAPACITY AND EFFECTIVENESS. WE DO THIS THROUGH PLANNING, EVALUATION AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND OUR FINANCE, HUMAN RESOURCES, FACILITIES MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES.

CORPORATE SERVICES

Pivotal to ACON's effectiveness is our Corporate Services team, which performs vital operational functions relating to human services, financial planning, facility management and information technology. Over the year, ACON enhanced its organisational capacity and operations by supporting our staff and improving our workplace, strengthening organisational and financial governance, establishing new systems and processes, driving efficiency improvements and implementing new technology initiatives.

ADAPTING TO COVID-19

ACON responded quickly and effectively to the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown, to ensure staff were supported in their work and the organisation was able to continue to meet the needs of our communities. Among the steps we undertook were:

- We improved remote access and upgraded equipment to facilitate remote working for all staff.
- We implemented new digital technologies to improve remote connectivity and communications.
- We provided staff with regular updates on the pandemic with up-to-date information.
- We developed a detailed 'Return to Office' Plan outlining key steps ACON will undertake to ensure a safe return to its sites.
- We provided a COVID Safe Workplace for all staff, volunteers, or visitors to ACON premises and services.

All of ACON's offices submitted COVID Safe Plans and were deemed COVID Safe workplaces.

- We implemented flexible work arrangements for all staff.
- During these unprecedented times, staff were encouraged to access the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and ACON provided a number of group sessions from our EAP provider.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

During the 2019/2020 financial year, ACON continued its organisational wide learning program, although the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on the provision of certain professional programs and how they were being offered.

Over the year 90 staff participated in 1,171 hours of targeted professional learning and development.

Additionally, all staff were provided with online ergonomic assessment presentations to assist in their transition to working away from the office.

Employee satisfaction remained high, with a result of 85%, down from 86% in the previous year. 87% of staff participated in the annual staff engagement survey.

As a result of the employee engagement survey, we refined our plan for improving workplace culture to ensure staff feedback was incorporated and that staff remain engaged and supported.

We delivered our two-day learning and development seminar, Big Days In, for all staff members. The event, held in October in Sydney, drew staff from across the state to hear about the latest developments in HIV prevention, sexuality and gender diverse health, community health and inclusion, as well as best practice in service design and delivery.



ACON staff, volunteers and supporters at the Sydney Mardi Gras Parade 2020

Information Technology assisted with regional office relocations and fit outs and upgraded IT systems.

Facilities Management continued the maintenance and efficient operation of facilities and ensured spaces were appropriately set up to comply with physical distancing requirements, under COVID-19 Safe Work Plans, to ensure the health and wellbeing of all in the building.

The Finance team provided timely and accurate reports throughout the period, particularly in relation to the impact of COVID-19 on the organisation and the financial budget.

We maintained all Work, Health and Safety compliance obligations, with no lost time accidents during the year.

IMPROVED SYSTEMS & DRIVING EFFICIENCY

We continued to develop and implement improved systems, processes and initiatives to strengthen our operational capabilities, as part of our commitment

to continuous improvement and our quality framework. These included:

- Implementation of DocuSign, a platform for the digital distribution of documents.
- Implementation of a new Risk Management framework in line with ISO/Australian standards.
- Implementation of a new in-house HR performance review module that is streamlined through a centralised service.
- Migrating ACON Intranet to Sharepoint Online platform as part of ACON's Office 365 Office implementation.
- Development of a new digital IT governance framework to increase user accessibility and improved data integrity.
- Roll out of a Compliance Framework across the organisation.
- Utilisation of the IPOS system to upload contract information to align with the Contracts Register.
- Telephone system upgrades.
- Further digitisation and streamlining of business processes through cloud technologies.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

We continued to increase ACON's profile and extend the reach of our health promotion messages through our marketing and communications activities. Key highlights include:

- We reached an estimated online audience of 3.1 million in 2019-2020, resulting from coverage in community and mainstream media. These included media releases and announcements of ACON campaigns and initiatives.
- Engagement on social media through various channels continued to grow. Across 23 Facebook channels, our followers grew by 7% to 70,239 compared to 64,635 in the previous year. Across eight Twitter accounts, connections rose from 14,471 to 15,811, an increase of 8%. On Instagram, followers grew by 42% across accounts, rising from 5209 to 9044.
- We continued to deliver a range of external and internal electronic newsletters to keep supporters and staff engaged with ACON's work. Our external digital subscribers continued to grow across our mailing lists.
- There was significant engagement across ACON's suite of websites including ACON, Ending HIV, Emen8, Pivot Point, Pride Inclusion Programs, Say It Out Loud.

Photography: David Alexander

Collectively, we recorded 2 million users accessing our digital resources throughout the year.

- Traffic to ACON's corporate website traffic saw sustained growth throughout the year. In the final quarter – April to June 2020 – pageviews grew by 5% to 88,717 compared to 84,416 for the same period last year.
- We continued to amplify the reach of our health promotion and community engagement messages through video. Across Facebook and YouTube, views on our various campaigns, corporate and social marketing videos grew by 14%, rising to 1.4 million compared to 1.2 million in the previous year.

OUR INCREDIBLE VOLUNTEERS

Crucial to ACON running its programs and services are its volunteers. Currently, ACON has over 500 volunteers that work in many roles across the organisation including assembling safe sex packs, delivering education programs, assisting with care and support services, providing governance and guidance at the board level, helping us run community events and raising much needed funds. We are extremely grateful for our volunteers!



RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

REFLECTING ON OUR FIRST RAP

In 2020, ACON concluded our first RAP – RELFECT. With this ambitious first RAP, we have laid some solid foundations for future actions by reflecting on our organisational culture, reviewing policies, building new partnerships and adapting our reporting systems to improve our accountability.

ACON'S INNOVATE RAP 2020-2022

With our new Innovate RAP, we will be prioritising an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led collaborative process for the development of strategic directions, programs and services across ACON.

We also know that to build authentic partnerships will require deep listening. Acknowledging the history of our country, communities and organisation is essential for building partnerships that are grounded in truth.

By working in partnership, making space for truth telling and celebrating, we will also contribute to

making progress in the critical area of employment. Making ACON a great place to work for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and exploring innovative ways to support their professional development is a key priority.

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK 2020

In June, over 125 people from across Australia joined ACON for the digital launch of our Innovate RAP during National Reconciliation Week.

The launch featured artistic performances from Dawn Daylight, a Jarrowair-Turrbal woman, respected Elder and LGBTIQ community leader, and Brooke Scobie, a queer Bundjalung poet, single mother and descendant of the Stolen Generations. Will Trewlynn from community organisation BlaQ, also facilitated a discussion with ACON's CEO and Director of Corporate Services about ACON's commitments to centering First Nations voices in our work, truth telling and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment.

ACON also produced a video for social media to raise awareness of National Reconciliation Week in our communities.

Photography: David Alexander; Felipe Molina Dorfhae



The First Nations float at Sydney Mardi Gras Parade 2020

HIV IN THE NSW ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER POPULATION

Better understanding barriers to HIV prevention and advocating for change are central to ACON's RAP. That's why we launched the *HIV in the NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population* report on World AIDS Day (1 December 2019). Developed in partnership with the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council, Aboriginal community members and HIV experts, the report makes a series of recommendations centred on ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are at the centre of a coordinated response to HIV; re-investing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sexual health services; and improving access to HIV and STI prevention and testing in a range of settings.

RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA FILM CLUB

In 2019, our regional offices in Northern NSW and the Hunter held screenings of *Occupation: Native*, a film which gives non-Indigenous people new understandings of Australian history that are too often absent from schoolbooks, from an Aboriginal point-of-view. The screenings were used as a starting point for a discussion and outreach with members of the community.

NEXT: JUSTICE FOR FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE

As ACON continues its organisational transformation process, we will strive to be the best possible allies at a pivotal time for justice and reconciliation.

ACON publicly expressed its solidarity with First Nations people and people of colour. We will continue to invite all members of our LGBTQ communities in Australia to stand in solidarity with First Nations people and unite in the movement against any form of brutality, injustice and systemic racism.



FINANCIALS

Financial Report

For the year ended 30 June 2020

ACON Health Limited

ABN38136883915

These financial statements are the consolidated financial statements of the consolidated entity consisting of ACON Health Limited and its subsidiary, AIDS Council of New South Wales Incorporated. The financial statements are presented in the Australian currency.

ACON Health Limited is a public company limited by guarantee, incorporated and domiciled in Australia. Its registered office and principal place of business is:

414 Elizabeth Street Surry Hills NSW 2010 Australia

A description of the nature of the consolidated entity's operations and its principal activities is included in the Directors' Report on pages 80 to 83 which is not part of these financial statements.

The financial statements were authorised for issue by the directors on 16 September 2020.
The directors have the power to amend and reissue the financial statement.

The directors present their report on the consolidated entity (referred to hereafter as the group) consisting of ACON Health Limited and its controlled entity, the AIDS Council of New South Wales Incorporated, for the year ended 30 June 2020.

Directors

The following persons were directors of ACON Health Limited during the whole of the financial year and up to the date of this report:

- Justin Koonin • Benjamin Bavinton • Louisa Degenhardt
- Andrew Purchas • Christian Dunk • Somali Cerise
- Atari Metcalf • Julie Mooney-Somers • Steven Berveling

Kim Gates resigned from the ACON Health Ltd Board on 12 July 2019.
Somali Cerise was appointed to the Board on 3 July 2019.

Anne-Marie Eades was appointed to the Board on 3 July 2019 and was granted six months Leave of Absence (from 3 September 2019 to 3 March 2020). Anne-Marie resigned from the Board on 3 March 2020.

ACON Board

Meetings of Directors

The number of meetings of the Company's board of directors during the year, and the number of meetings attended by each director were:

From 1 July 2019 - 30 June 2020		
Board member	Meetings Held	Meetings Attended
Justin Koonin	6	6
Andrew Purchas	6	6
Anne-Marie Eades	4	-
Atari Metcalf	6	3
Benjamin Bavinton	6	5
Christian Dunk	6	5
Julie Mooney-Somers	6	6
Louisa Degenhardt	6	6
Somali Cerise	6	4
Steven Berveling	6	6

Principal activities and objectives

From our revised strategic plan, our purpose is to create opportunities for people in our communities to live their healthiest lives, we achieve this through:

Ending HIV transmission among gay men and other homosexually active men by:

- Increasing the knowledge of gay men and other men who have sex with men about when to seek a HIV and STI test.
- Using innovative, targeted engagement strategies to motivate gay men and other men who have sex with men to test more regularly.
- Increasing the number of HIV positive gay men who understand the benefits of accessing treatment earlier.
- Sustaining the safe sex knowledge of gay men and men who have sex with men utilising both condom and non- condom based risk reduction strategies.
- Advocating for better access to home-based or self-administered HIV testing and access to Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis for those who would most benefit.
- Reducing psycho social barriers to testing and treatment uptake for people who are newly diagnosed through education, counselling and peer support.
- Ensure the range of HIV Health Promotion programs continues to relevant and useful for people with HIV.
- Developing a HIV Health Promotion Strategy focusing on post diagnosis support, living well with HIV and planning for healthy ageing.
- We create opportunities for people in our communities to live their healthiest lives.

Promoting the health throughout life of sexuality and gender diverse people and people with HIV by:

- Providing HIV Care and Support services including:
 - Counselling
 - Enhanced Primary Care
 - Community Support Network
 - Newly Diagnosed Service
- Reviewing our current care and support programs to ensure they continue to meet the needs of people with HIV.
- Intensifying our focus on immediate post diagnosis care and support to prevent infection rates and improve the health outcomes for newly diagnosed
- Enhancing our intake and case management processes to ensure person centred, tailored responses.
- Enhancing our treatments advice and adherence support capacity to educate people with HIV about the benefits of earlier and increased treatment uptake.
- Developing programs to address the health areas that have the most negative health impact on people living with HIV, e.g Enhanced Primary Care.
- Addressing substance support use co-morbidities through counselling from the substance use service, Needle Syringe Programs, harm minimisation support and referrals to drug and alcohol treatment services.
- Addressing the health disparities experienced by the sexuality and gender diverse community and to reduce the impacts of negative health determinants including:
 - Alcohol and Other Drugs
 - Mental Health & Wellbeing
 - Smoking
 - Homophobic & Transphobic Violence
 - Healthy Ageing
 - Aged Care
 - Domestic & Family Violence

Continuing to strengthen organisational capacity and sustainability by:

- Ensuring our infrastructure and systems enable staff to effectively deliver programs and services to rural and remote NSW.
- Investigating and implementing new partnerships, fee for service models and social enterprise approaches to diversify our funding base.
- Exploring opportunities to grow discretionary revenue through fundraising, new grants and fee for service.
- Continuing to invest in building our data collection, analysis evaluation and knowledge management capacity.
- Building the research capacity of our staff through seeding grants and partnerships with academic institutions.
- Continuing to build our presence, capacity and effectiveness in the digital space to increase reach and impact.
- Advocating and Promoting Social Inclusion by:
 - Providing sexuality and gender diverse employees within Australian workplaces targeted initiatives via education and benchmarking and through the Pride in Diversity Program.
 - Establishing Partnerships with government, other NGO's, healthcare providers, researchers and affected communities
 - Ensuring all direct sexuality and gender diverse services are sensitive to the needs of and available to all of our communities,
 - Ensuring all of our training packages for service providers are inclusive of our populations,
 - Ensuring our advocacy work in the areas of discrimination and human rights are inclusive of the needs and views of all our communities and is conducted in consultation with relevant stakeholders,
 - Developing strategies, in collaboration with key partners to maximise inclusiveness and reach of health promotion strategies.
 - Developing 'population specific' communication strategies to ensure our programs are visible to all of the communities they are intended to reach,
 - Performance measures (key performance indicators)
 - A decrease in HIV infections among gay men and other MSM in NSW
 - An increase in reported levels of health and wellbeing by people with HIV
 - A reduction in the number of people in our communities who experience negative health and other outcomes as a result drug and alcohol use
 - An increase in reported levels of health and wellbeing by women in our communities
 - An increase in reported levels of health and wellbeing by older people in our communities
 - An increase in ACON's involvement with sexuality and gender diverse health and HIV/AIDS policy and programs delivery at the local, national and international levels.
 - Increase the capacity of ACON to effectively use and manage its resources

Review of operations

Operations for the year ended 30 June 2020 resulted in an operating surplus of \$331,113 (30 June 2019: operating surplus of \$875,440). During the year the organisation adopted AASB 1058 Income of Not-for-Profit Entities and AASB 15 Revenue from Contracts. This resulted in Government Grant revenue from incomplete contracts amounting to \$2,158,008 being deferred and recognised as revenue as and when performance obligations are satisfied. The new Accounting Standard AASB 16 Leases was also adopted recognising a right-of-use asset and related lease liability. The new lease standard impacts on the net surplus for 2020 as follows:

	2020 \$
Net surplus under old accounting standard AASB 117 Leases	502,230
Impact of new accounting standard AASB 16 Leases	(87,370)
Net surplus	414,860
Loss in fair value of investment	(83,747)
Operating surplus	331,113

2019/2020 has been a challenging year for ACON with the COVID-19 pandemic impacting on operations. Demand for ACON's services increased whilst at the same time it was necessary to adapt our service delivery mechanisms to ensure the safety of clients, staff and volunteers. Whilst there was a financial impact on Fundraising, Events and Membership, this was offset to some extent by Government Subsidies in relation to COVID.

Application of funds

The net surplus obtained from fundraising activities was applied to the purposes of ACON Health Limited as described under 'principal activities' above.

Winding Up

Each Member undertakes to contribute to the assets of ACON Health, if it is wound up while they are a Member, or within one year afterwards, an amount of money not exceeding the limit of liability of \$2 at the time of winding up the debts and liabilities of ACON Health exceed its assets.

Matters subsequent to the end of the financial year

At the time of finalisation of the financial report, COVID-19 has restricted both the business from fundraising activity and had an effect on the overall economy. There is large uncertainty as to the impacts this may have on ACON, and what government assistance will be given.

No other matter or circumstance has arisen since 30 June 2020 that has significantly affected, or may significantly affect:

- 1) the Group's operations in future financial years, or
- 2) the results of those operations in future financial years, or
- 3) the Group's state of affairs in future financial years.

Likely developments and expected results of operations

Information on likely developments in the operations of the Group and the expected results of operations have not been included in this Directors' Report because the Directors believe it would be likely to result in unreasonable prejudice to the Group.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Board.

Dated at Sydney this 16 September 2020



Justin Koonin
President



Andrew Purchas
Vice President

Consolidated statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income

For the year ended 30 June 2020

	Notes	2020 \$	2019 \$
Income			
Grants:			
NSW Department of Health		12,020,116	11,916,636
Local Health Districts		439,703	418,573
Other grants		2,559,320	2,309,567
Fundraising	15(a)	720,972	861,650
Interest received/receivable		126,253	163,390
Membership		3,691	3,385
Fee for service		2,609,030	2,538,932
Rent received		264,441	267,489
Sale of vitamins		7,169	7,285
Sale of materials		52,153	122,684
Other Income		690,410	337,173
Total revenue from operations		19,493,257	18,946,764
Expenditure			
Salaries & associated costs		12,381,783	10,901,402
Campaigns & Education		1,378,341	1,600,087
Rent and rates		432,858	1,908,868
Depreciation – plant & equipment		1,969,803	293,904
Amortisation – lease incentive		-	150,500
Finance expense – lease		144,816	-
Building maintenance		294,401	293,315
Communications		178,830	173,302
Travel and representation		358,817	481,095
Donations given		84,093	65,016
Events and activities		336,082	526,710
Administrative costs		1,471,363	1,626,937
Cost of goods sold		47,210	50,178
Total expenditure		19,078,397	18,071,314
Net Surplus (Deficit) for the year before tax		414,860	875,450
Gain/(Loss) in fair value of investment		(83,747)	-
Total comprehensive income for the year		(83,747)	-
Operating surplus (deficit) of ACON Health Limited		331,113	875,450

The above Consolidated Statement of profit and loss should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Consolidated statement of financial position

As at 30 June 2020

	Notes	2020 \$	2019 \$
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	4	7,742,217	7,765,291
Receivables	5	488,282	1,436,048
Contract asset		434,708	20,743
Inventories		3,198	2,330
Prepayments		211,428	163,931
Total Current Assets		8,879,833	9,366,857
Non-Current Assets			
Other Financial Assets		1,357,769	24,454
Plant & equipment and lease incentive	6	904,660	893,951
Right-of-use asset	7	19,922,434	-
Total Non-Current Assets		22,184,863	918,405
Total Assets		31,064,696	10,285,262
Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	8	763,218	812,807
Grants and revenue in advance	9	3,708,194	1,018,434
Lease Liability	11	1,323,000	-
Employee entitlements	10	1,909,060	1,637,946
Total Current Liabilities		7,703,472	3,469,187
Non-current Liabilities			
Lease Liability	11	18,610,336	238,292
Total Non-current Liabilities		18,610,336	238,292
Total Liabilities		26,313,808	3,707,279
Net Assets		4,750,888	6,577,783
Accumulated Funds			
Retained surplus at the end of the year	17	3,317,543	5,060,691
Funds Reserve		1,485,272	1,485,272
Revaluation Reserve		(51,927)	31,820
Total Accumulated Funds		4,750,888	6,577,783

The above Consolidated Statement of Financial Position should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Consolidated statement of changes in stakeholders' funds

For the year ended 30 June 2020

	Retained Surplus	Revaluation Reserve	Funds Reserve	Total
Year ended 30 June 2020				
Total stakeholder funds at the beginning of the financial year	5,060,691	31,820	1,485,272	6,577,783
Adjustment for adoption of AASB 15 and AASB 1058	(2,158,008)	-	-	(2,158,008)
Balance at 1 July 2019 – restated	2,902,683	31,820	-	4,419,775
Transfer to funds reserve	-	-	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	414,860	(83,747)	-	331,113
Total stakeholder funds at the end of the financial year	3,317,543	(51,927)	1,485,272	4,750,888
Year ended 30 June 2019				
Total stakeholder funds at the beginning of the financial year	4,500,754	31,820	1,169,759	5,702,333
Transfer to funds reserve	(315,513)	-	315,513	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	875,450	-	-	875,450
Total stakeholder funds at the end of the financial year	5,060,691	31,820	1,485,272	6,577,783

The above Consolidated Statement of Changes in Stakeholders' Funds should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Consolidated statement of cash flows

For The Year Ended 30 June 2020

	Notes	2020 \$	2019 \$
Cash flows from operating activities			
Receipts from customers, granting bodies & fundraising (inclusive of goods & services tax)		22,347,771	19,705,118
Payments to suppliers and employees (inclusive of goods & services tax)		(18,897,992)	(19,118,552)
Interest received		126,253	163,390
Net cash inflow from operating activities		3,576,032	749,986
Cash flows from investing activities			
Payments for property, plant & equipment		(479,676)	(179,228)
Payment for investment		(1,400,000)	-
Net cash outflow from investing activities		(1,879,676)	(179,228)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Principle repayments for leases		(1,719,430)	-
Net cash outflow from financing activities		(1,719,430)	-
Net increase in cash held		(23,074)	570,758
Cash at the beginning of the year		7,765,291	7,194,533
Cash at the end of the year	4	7,742,217	7,765,291

The above Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Notes to the consolidated financial statements

1. Summary of significant accounting policies

The principal accounting policies adopted in the preparation of these consolidated financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all the years presented, unless otherwise stated. The financial statements are for the consolidated entity consisting of ACON Health Limited and its subsidiary, AIDS Council of New South Wales Incorporated.

A. Basis of preparation

These general purpose financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and Interpretations issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board and the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission Act 2012. ACON Health Limited is a not-for-profit entity for the purpose of preparing the financial statements.

i) Compliance with Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements

The consolidated financial statements of the ACON Health Limited group comply with Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements as issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB).

ii) New and amended standards adopted by the group

AASB 1058 Income of Not-for-Profit Entities and AASB 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers

In the current year, the Group has applied AASB 1058 Income of Not-for-Profit Entities and AASB 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers which is effective for an annual period that begins on or after 1 January 2019.

The date of initial application of AASB 1058 and AASB 15 for the Group is 1 July 2019. The Group has applied AASB 1058 and AASB 15 in accordance with the modified retrospective (cumulative catch-up) method where the comparative years are not restated. Instead, the Group has recognised the cumulative effect of initially applying AASB 1058 and AASB 15 for the first time for the year ending 30 June 2020 against retained earnings as at 1 July 2019. The Group has also elected to apply AASB 1058 and AASB 15 retrospectively only to contracts and transactions that are not 'completed contracts' as at 1 July 2019.

Overview of AASB 1058 and AASB 15 requirements

AASB 1058 clarifies and simplifies the income recognition requirements that apply to not-for-profit (NFP) entities, in conjunction with AASB 15. The new income recognition requirements shift the focus from a reciprocal/non-reciprocal basis to a basis of assessment that considers the enforceability of a contract and the specificity of performance obligations.

The core principle of the new income recognition requirements in AASB 1058 is that when a NFP entity enters into transactions where the consideration to acquire an asset is significantly less than the fair value of the asset principally to enable the entity to further its objectives, the excess of the asset recognised (at fair value) over any 'related amounts' is recognised as income immediately.

An example of a 'related amount' is AASB 15 and in cases where there is an 'enforceable' contract with a customer with 'sufficiently specific' performance obligations, income is recognised when (or as) the performance obligations are satisfied under AASB 15, as opposed to any excess above the related amounts that would be immediate income recognition under AASB 1058.

Under AASB 15, an entity recognises revenue when (or as) a performance obligation is satisfied, i.e. when 'control' of the goods or services underlying the particular performance obligation is transferred to the customer. AASB 15 introduces a 5-step approach to revenue recognition, which is more prescriptive than AASB 118.

The Group has applied the new income requirements to its main revenue streams, as listed below:

- Government grants
- Donations and bequests
- Volunteer services

Government grants

AASB 1058 requires that in cases where there is an 'enforceable' contract with a customer with 'sufficiently specific' performance obligations, the transaction should be accounted for under AASB 15 where income is recognised when (or as) the performance obligations are satisfied, as opposed to immediate income recognition under AASB 1058.

The Group has conducted an analysis of the government grant contracts and analysed the terms of each contract to determine whether the arrangement meets the enforceability and the 'sufficiently specific' criteria under AASB 15. For those grant contracts that are not enforceable or the performance obligations are not sufficiently specific, this will result in immediate income recognition under AASB 1058. Income will be deferred under AASB 15 otherwise and recognised when (or as) the performance obligations are satisfied.

Based on an analysis of the Group's grant contracts as at 1 July 2019, the Group notes that government grant revenue related to incomplete contracts amounts to \$2,158,008. This will be deferred and recognised as revenue as and when performance obligations are satisfied over the year to 30 June 2020.

Donations and bequests

Based on an analysis of the Group's underlying arrangements for donations and bequests as at 1 July 2019, the Group has assessed that the adoption of the new income requirements do not have a significant impact on the amounts recognised in the Group's consolidated financial statements as the majority of the donations and bequests do not meet the enforceability and the 'sufficiently specific' criteria under AASB 15 and would therefore be recognised as income once the Group controlled the relevant asset (assuming no other related amounts are applicable) under AASB 1058, which is in line with the current income recognition under AASB 1004.

Volunteer services

Under AASB 1058, private sector not-for-profit entities will have a policy option to account for donated services at fair value if the fair value can be reliably measured. No revenue for volunteer services has been recognised during the year.

Financial statement impacts

The Group's accounting policies for its revenue streams are disclosed in detail in note 3 below. Apart from providing more extensive disclosures for the Group's revenue transactions, the application of AASB 15 and AASB 1058 has not had a significant impact on the financial position and/or financial performance of the Group. The amount of adjustment for each financial statement line item affected by the application of AASB15 and AASB 1058 is illustrated below.

	As presented under AASB 1004 \$'000	AASB 1058/AASB15 adjustments* \$'000	As presented under AASB 1058/AASB15 \$'000
Revenue			
Grants	17,397,698	(2,378,559)	15,019,139
Donations and bequests	720,972	-	720,972
Volunteer services	-	-	-
Liabilities			
Grants in advance	1,018,434	2,158,008	3,176,442
Equity			
Retained surplus	5,060,691	(2,158,008)	2,902,683

AASB 16 Leases

AASB 16 Leases replaces AASB 17 Leases. Adoption of this new Standard has resulted in the group recognising a right-of-use asset and related lease liability in connection with all former operating leases except for those identified as low-value or having a remaining lease term of less than 12 months from the date of initial application.

The new Standard has been applied using the modified retrospective approach and practical expedient, with the opening balance of right-of-use asset and lease liability matching for the current period. There have been no impact on the opening balance of retained earnings.

The Group has elected not to include initial direct costs in the measurement of the right-of-use asset for operating leases in existence at the date of initial application of AASB 16, being 1 July 2019. At this date, the Group has also elected to measure the right-of-use assets at an amount equal to the lease liability adjusted for any prepaid or accrued lease payments that existed at the date of transition. The change to amortisation expense and interest expense resulted in an additional \$87,370 recognised as expenses to the operating surplus for the year ended 30 June 2020.

On transition to AASB 16 the weighted average incremental borrowing rate applied to lease liabilities recognised under AASB 16 was 6.36%.

The following is a reconciliation of the financial statement line items from AASB 17 to AASB 16 at 1 July 2019:

	Carrying amount at 30 June 2019	Reclassification	Remeasurement	Carrying amount at 1 July 2019
Right-of-use asset	-	-	3,463,955	3,463,955
Lease liability	238,292	-	3,463,955	3,702,247

The following is a reconciliation of total operating lease commitments at 30 June 2019 to the lease liabilities recognised as 1 July 2019:

	\$
Total operating lease commitments disclosed at 30 June 2019	3,825,075
Discounted using incremental borrowing rate	(361,120)
Operating lease liabilities	3,463,955
Other commitments	238,292
Total lease liabilities recognised at 1 July 2019	3,702,247

B. Principles of consolidation

The consolidated financial statements incorporate the assets and liabilities of the subsidiary of ACON Health Limited ("company" or "parent entity") as at 30 June 2020 and the results of the subsidiary for the year then ended. ACON Health Limited and its subsidiary together are referred to in this financial report as the group or the consolidated entity.

Subsidiaries are all entities (including special purpose entities) over which the group has the power to govern the financial and operating policies, generally accompanying a shareholding of more than one half of the voting rights. The existence and effect of potential voting rights that are currently exercisable or convertible are considered when assessing whether the group controls another entity.

Subsidiaries are fully consolidated from the date on which control is transferred to the group. They are de-consolidated from the date that control ceases.

Inter company transactions, balances and unrealised gains on transactions between group companies are eliminated. Unrealised losses are also eliminated unless the transaction provides evidence of the impairment of the asset transferred. Accounting policies of subsidiaries have been changed where necessary to ensure consistency with the policies adopted by the group.

C. Revenue

i) Government grants, donations and bequests

When the Group receives government grants, donations and bequests that are in the scope of AASB1058 (being a transaction where the consideration paid to acquire an asset is significantly less than fair value principally to enable the Group to further its objectives), it performs an assessment to determine if the contract is 'enforceable' and contains 'sufficiently specific' performance obligations.

In cases where there is an 'enforceable' contract with a customer with 'sufficiently specific' performance obligations, the transaction is accounted for under AASB 15 where income is recognised when (or as) the performance obligations are satisfied.

In all other cases (where the contract is not 'enforceable' or the performance obligations are not 'sufficiently specific'), the transaction is accounted for under AASB 1058 where the Group:

- Recognises the asset in accordance with the requirements of other relevant applicable Australian Accounting Standards (e.g. AASB 9, AASB 16, AASB 116 and AASB138)
- Considers whether any other financial statement elements should be recognised ('related amounts') in accordance with the relevant applicable Australian Accounting Standard including:
- contributions by owners (AASB1004)
- a lease liability (AASB16)
- revenue, or a contract liability arising from a contract with a customer (AASB15)
- a financial instrument (AASB9)
- a provision (AASB137)
- Recognises income immediately in profit or loss for the excess of the initial carrying amount of the asset over any related amounts recognised.

ii) Volunteer services

The Group regularly receives volunteer services as part of its operations. Under AASB 1058, private sector not-for-profit entities have a policy option to account for donated services at fair value if the fair value can be reliably measured.

While the Group has assessed that the fair value of its volunteer services can be reliably measured, it has decided to adopt the policy option not to recognise volunteer services. Accordingly, no amounts are recognised in the financial statements for volunteer services.

Policy for 2019

Revenue was measured at the fair value of the consideration received or receivable. Amounts disclosed as revenue were net of any rebates and amounts collected on behalf of third parties.

The group recognised revenue when the amount of revenue could be reliably measured, and it was probable that future economic benefits would flow to the entity and specific criteria had been met.

D. Leases

i) Right-of-use asset

A right-of-use asset is recognised at the commencement date of a lease. The right-of-use asset is measured at cost, which comprises the initial amount of the lease liability, adjusted for, as applicable, any lease payments made at or before the commencement date net of any lease incentives received, any initial direct costs incurred and an estimate of costs expected to be incurred for dismantling and removing the underlying asset, and restoring the site or asset.

Right-of-use assets are depreciated on a straight-line basis over the unexpired period of the lease or the estimated useful life of the asset, whichever is the shorter. Where the company expects to obtain ownership of the leased asset at the end of the lease term, the depreciation is over its estimated useful life. Right-of use assets are subject to impairment or adjusted for any remeasurement of lease liabilities.

The company has elected not to recognise a right-of-use asset and corresponding lease liability for short-term leases with terms of 12 months or less and leases of low-value assets. Lease payments on these assets are expensed to profit or loss as incurred.

ii) Lease liability

A lease liability is recognised at the commencement date of a lease. The lease liability is initially recognised at the present value of the lease payments to be made over the term of the lease, discounted using the interest rate implicit in the lease or, if that rate cannot be readily determined, the company's incremental borrowing rate,

being the rate that the company would have to pay to borrow the funds necessary to obtain an asset of similar value to the right-of-use asset in a similar economic environment with similar terms, security and conditions. Lease payments comprise fixed payments less any lease incentives receivable, variable lease payments that depend on an index or a rate, amounts expected to be paid under residual value guarantees, exercise price of a purchase option when the exercise of the option is reasonably certain to occur, and any anticipated termination penalties. The variable lease payments that do not depend on an index or a rate are expensed in the period in which they are incurred.

Lease liabilities are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method. The carrying amounts are remeasured if there is a change in the following: future lease payments arising from a change in an index or a rate used; residual guarantee; lease term; certainty of a purchase option and termination penalties. When a lease liability is remeasured, an adjustment is made to the corresponding right-of use asset, or to profit or loss if the carrying amount of the right-of-use asset is fully written down.

Policy for 2019

Leases in which a significant portion of the risks and rewards of ownership were not transferred to the group as lessee were classified as operating leases(note14). Payments made under operating leases (net of any incentives received from the lessor) were charged to profit or loss on a straight-line basis over the period of the lease.

Incentives received on entering into operating leases were recognised as liabilities (note 16).

E. Impairment of assets

Assets are tested for impairment whenever events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying amount may not be recoverable. An impairment loss is recognised for the amount by which the asset's carrying amount exceeds its recoverable amount. The recoverable amount is the higher of an asset's fair value less costs to sell and value in use. For the purposes of assessing impairment, assets are grouped at the lowest levels for which there are separately identifiable cash inflows which are largely independent of the cash inflows from other assets or groups of assets (cash-generating units). Non-financial assets that suffered impairment are reviewed for possible reversal of the impairment at the end of each reporting period.

F. Cash and cash equivalents

For the purpose of presentation in the statement of cash flows, cash and cash equivalents includes cash on hand, deposits held at call with financial institutions, other short-term, highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and which are subject to an insignificant risk of changes in value.

G. Trade receivables

Trade receivables are recognised initially at fair value and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method, less provision for impairment. Trade receivables are generally due for settlement within 30 days. They are presented as current assets unless collection is not expected for more than 12 months after the reporting date.

Collectability of trade debtors is reviewed on an ongoing basis. Debts which are known to be uncollectible are written off by reducing the carrying amount directly. The group makes use of a simplified approach in accounting for trade and other receivables as well as contract assets and records the loss allowance at the amount equal to the expected lifetime credit losses. In using this practical expedient, the group uses its historical experience, external indicators and forward-looking information to calculate the expected credit losses using a provision matrix. A provision for impairment of trade receivables is used when there is objective evidence that the group will not be able to collect all amounts due according to the original terms of the receivables.

The amount of the impairment loss is recognised in profit or loss within other expenses. When a trade receivable for which an impairment allowance had been recognised becomes uncollectible in a subsequent period, it is written off against the allowance account.

H. Inventories

Inventories are represented by vitamin stock and are stated at the lower of cost or net realisable value on the basis of first in first out.

I. Investments and other financial assets

Classification

The group classifies its financial assets in the following categories: loans and receivables, held-to-maturity investments, financial assets at fair value through profit or loss and available-for-sale financial assets. The classification depends on the purpose for which the investments were acquired. Management determines the classification of its investments at initial recognition.

i) Loans and receivables

Loans and receivables are non-derivative financial assets with fixed or determinable payments that are not quoted in an active market. They are included in current assets, except for those with maturities greater than 12 months after the reporting period which are classified as non-current assets.

ii) Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss

Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss are financial assets held for trading. A financial asset is classified in this category if acquired principally for the purpose of selling in the short term. Derivatives are classified as held for trading unless they are designated as hedges. Assets in this category are classified as current assets if they are expected to be settled within 12 months; otherwise they are classified as non-current.

Measurement

At initial recognition, the Group measures a financial asset at its fair value plus, in the case of a financial asset not at fair value through profit or loss, transaction costs that are directly attributable to the acquisition of the financial asset. Transaction costs of financial assets carried at fair value through profit or loss are expensed through other comprehensive income.

Loans and receivables are subsequently carried at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

Impairment

The Group assesses at the end of each reporting period whether there is objective evidence that a financial asset or group of financial assets is impaired. A financial asset or a group of financial assets is impaired and impairment losses are incurred only if there is objective evidence of impairment as a result of one or more events that occurred after the initial recognition of the asset (a 'loss event') and that loss event (or events) has an impact on the estimated future cash flows of the financial asset or group of financial assets that can be reliably estimated.

i) Assets carried at amortised cost

For loans and receivables, the amount of the loss is measured as the difference between the asset's carrying amount and the present value of estimated future cash flows (excluding future credit losses that have not been incurred) discounted at the financial asset's original effective interest rate. The carrying amount of the asset is reduced and the amount of the loss is recognised in the profit or loss. If a loan has a variable interest rate, the discount rate for measuring any impairment loss is the current effective interest rate determined under the contract. As a practical expedient, the Group may measure impairment on the basis of an instrument's fair value using an observable market price. If, in a subsequent period, the amount of the impairment loss decreases and the decrease can be related objectively to an event occurring after the impairment was recognised (such as an improvement in the debtor's credit rating), the reversal of the previously recognised impairment loss is recognised in the profit or loss.

J. Plant & equipment

Plant and equipment is stated at historical cost less depreciation. Historical cost includes expenditure that is directly attributable to the acquisition of the items.

Subsequent costs are included in the asset's carrying amount or recognised as a separate asset, as appropriate, only when it is probable that future economic benefits associated with the item will flow to the group and the cost of the item can be measured reliably. The carrying amount of any component accounted for as a separate asset is derecognised when replaced. All other repairs and maintenance are charged to profit or loss during the reporting period in which they are incurred.

The Group is gifted works of art from time to time. Works gifted are valued at the time of the gift and are capitalised at that amount. Works of Art are valued at regular intervals at the Directors' discretion. Revaluations reflect independent assessments of the fair market value of works of art.

Depreciation is calculated using the straight-line method to allocate cost, net of residual values, over the estimated useful lives of assets as follows:

Furniture & Fittings:	2-5 years,
Office & IT Equipment:	2-5 years,
Leasehold improvements	10years

The assets' residual values and useful lives are reviewed, and adjusted if appropriate, at the end of each reporting period. An asset's carrying amount is written down immediately to its recoverable amount if the asset's carrying amount is greater than its estimated recoverable amount (note 1(f)).

Gains and losses on disposals are determined by comparing proceeds with carrying amount. These are included in profit or loss. When revalued assets are sold, it is group policy to transfer any amounts included in other reserves in respect of those assets to retained earnings.

Leasehold improvements

The cost of fit out of ACON's head office leased at 414 Elizabeth St, Surry Hills, has been capitalised to leasehold improvement and is being amortised over the lease term of 10 years.

The cost of extensions to the Hunter branch on premises leased at 129 Maitland Road, Islington has been capitalised to Leasehold Improvements and is being amortised over the lease term of 10 years.

K. Trade and other creditors

These amounts represent liabilities for goods and services provided to the group prior to the end of the financial year which are unpaid. The amounts are unsecured and are usually paid within 30 days of recognition. Included is the Pride in Diversity program includes annual membership paid by participating organisations. The revenue is recognised over the membership period and hence the deferred/(unearned) revenue represents that which is yet to meet the performance criteria.

L. Employee entitlements

Wages and salaries, annual leave and sick leave

Liabilities for wages and salaries, including non-monetary benefits, annual leave and accumulating sick leave expected to be settled within 12 months after the end of the period in which the employees render the related service are recognised in respect of employees' services up to the end of the reporting period and are measured at the amounts expected to be paid when the liabilities are settled. The liability for annual leave and accumulating sick leave is recognised in the provision for employee benefits. All other short-term employee benefit obligations are presented as payables.

Long Service Leave

The liability for long service leave expected to be settled within 12 months of the reporting date is recognised in the provision for employee benefits and is measured in accordance with the policy above. The liability for long service leave expected to be settled more than 12 months from the reporting date is recognised in the provision for employee benefits and measured as the present value of expected future payments to be made in respect of services provided by employees up to the reporting date.

The obligations are presented as current liabilities in the balance sheet if the entity does not have an unconditional right to defer settlement for at least twelve months after the reporting date, regardless of when the actual settlement is expected to occur.

Superannuation

Contributions are made by the group to several employee superannuation funds of choice and are recognised as expenses as they become payable.

M. Goods and services tax (GST)

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of associated GST, unless the GST incurred is not recoverable from the taxation authority. In this case it is recognised as part of the cost of acquisition of the asset or as part of the expense.

Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivable or payable. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the taxation authority is included with other receivables or payables in the balance sheet.

Cash flows are presented on a gross basis. The GST components of cash flows arising from investing or financing activities which are recoverable from, or payable to the taxation authority, are presented as operating cash flows.

N. Parent entity financial information

The financial information for the parent entity, ACON Health Limited, disclosed in note 16 has been prepared on the same basis as the consolidated financial statements.

2. Critical accounting estimates and assumptions

The Group makes estimates and assumptions concerning the future. The resulting accounting estimates will, by definition, seldom equal the related actual results. The estimates and assumptions that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next financial year are discussed below.

Revenue recognition

To determine if a grant contract should be accounted for under AASB 1058 or AASB 15, the Group has to determine if the contract is 'enforceable' and contains 'sufficiently specific' performance obligations. When assessing if the performance obligations are 'sufficiently specific', the Group has applied significant judgement in this regard by performing a detailed analysis of the terms and conditions contained in the grant contracts, review of accompanying documentation (e.g. activity work plans) and holding discussions with relevant parties.

Income recognition from grants received by the Group has been appropriately accounted for under AASB 1058 or AASB 15 based on the assessment performed.

Provisions for employee benefits

Provisions for employee benefits payable after 12 months from the reporting date are based on future wage and salary levels, experience of employee departures and periods of service. The amount of these provisions would change should any of these factors change in the next 12 months.

3. Income tax

ACON Health Limited is a Health Promotion Charity and the AIDS Council of New South Wales Incorporated is a Public Benevolent Institution. As such, both are exempt from paying income tax.

4. Current assets – cash and cash equivalents

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Cash on hand	3,255	3,425
Cash at bank		
Cheque account – operations	7,738,962	7,761,866
	7,742,217	7,765,291

5. Current assets –receivables

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Trade receivables	508,282	1,456,048
Provision for doubtful debts	(20,000)	(20,000)
	488,282	1,436,048

The amount of the provision for doubtful debts was \$20,000 (30 June 2019: \$20,000). All of the group's trade and other receivables have been reviewed for indicators of impairment. Certain trade receivables were found to be impaired and an allowance for credit losses of \$nil (30 June 2019: \$nil) has been recorded accordingly within other expenses.

The movement in the allowance for credit losses can be reconciled as follows:

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Reconciliation of allowance credit losses		
Balance 1 July	-	-
Amounts written off (uncollectable)	-	-
Impairment loss	20,000	20,000
Balance 30 June	-	-
	20,000	20,000

6. Non-current assets - plant & equipment and lease incentive

Reconciliations of the carrying amounts of each class of plant and equipment and lease incentives at the beginning and end of the current financial year are set out below:

	Furniture & fittings \$	Office & IT Equipment \$	Library Works of Art \$	Leasehold improvements \$	Lease Incentive \$	Totals \$
At 30 June 2019						
Cost or fair value	924,558	1,736,564	146,650	1,403,633	1,505,000	5,716,405
Accumulated depreciation	(884,997)	(1,534,811)	-	(1,135,937)	(1,266,709)	(4,822,454)
Net book value	39,561	201,753	146,650	267,696	238,291	893,951
Year ended 30 June 2020						
Opening net book value	39,561	201,753	146,650	267,696	238,291	893,951
Additions	92,468	188,246	-	188,664	-	469,378
Depreciation/ amortisation charge	(21,816)	(153,351)	-	(133,003)	(150,500)	(458,670)
Closing net book value	110,213	236,648	146,650	323,360	87,791	904,660
At 30 June 2020						
Cost or fair value	1,017,026	1,924,810	146,650	1,592,297	1,505,000	6,185,783
Accumulated depreciation	(906,813)	(1,688,162)	-	(1,268,940)	(1,417,209)	(5,281,124)
Net book value	110,213	236,648	146,650	323,357	87,791	904,660

7. Right of use asset

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Non-current assets		
Right-of-use assets	21,531,621	-
Less: Accumulated depreciation	(1,609,187)	-
Total	19,922,434	-

8. Current liabilities – trade and other payables

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Goods & Services Tax net payable	340,234	350,193
Trade creditors	3,953	162,218
Accrued expenses	419,031	300,396
Total	763,218	812,807

9. Current liabilities – grants and revenue in advance

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Grants in advance	2,662,014	-
Deferred revenue	1,046,180	1,018,434
Total	3,708,194	1,018,434

10. Current liabilities – employee entitlements

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Employee entitlements - annual and long service leave	1,909,060	1,637,946
Number of employees at reporting date (full time equivalent)	115	109

11. Lease liability

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Current liabilities		
Lease Liability	1,323,000	-
Non-current liabilities		
Lease Liability	18,610,336	238,292
Total	19,933,336	238,292

12. Remuneration of members of the board

Members of the Board, serve on the Board of the group in a voluntary capacity and receive no remuneration for this service to the group.

13. Related party transactions

During the year ACON Health Limited had no transactions with related parties.

14. Economic dependency

The major source of funding for the group is an annual grant from the NSW Ministry of Health. The NSW Ministry of Health has agreed to maintain current funding levels in the 2020/2021 financial year.

15. Charitable fundraising act 1991

Charitable Fundraising Act 1991 (the Act) prescribes the manner in which fundraising appeals are conducted, controlled and reported. ACON Health Limited was issued with an authority to fundraise by the Office of Charities to fundraise for the period 4 May 2017 to 3 May 2022.

The Entity has disclosed the income statement, balance sheet and related notes below in respect of fundraising appeals it conducted during the year. These disclosures have been made in accordance with Section 6 of the Charitable Fundraising Authority Conditions, which have been issued to the Entity under section 19 of the Act.

Information and declarations to be furnished under the Charitable Fundraising Act 1991.

The information disclosed below is in relation to fundraising activities undertaken by ACON Health Limited.

a) Income Statement

	2020 Total	2019 Total
Gross income received from fundraising	720,972	861,650
Cost of fundraising	246,929	287,306
Net proceeds from fundraising	474,042	574,344
Application of net proceeds	474,042	574,344
Net surplus from fundraising	-	-

	Red Ribbon \$	Vivid \$	General \$
Gross income received from fundraising	78,350	-	564,199
Cost of fundraising	26,071	-	220,858
Net proceeds from fundraising	52,279	-	343,341
Application of net proceeds	52,279	-	343,341
Net surplus from fundraising	-	-	-

Forms of general fundraising activities conducted during the year covered by these financial statements were: Concerts, Appeals, Bingo, Dinners and Special Nights at Venues.

The net proceeds from the Red Ribbon Appeal, Vivid Appeal and General Appeal were used for general purposes throughout the year as part of ACON Health Limited's daily operation.

b) Balance Sheet

	2020 Total	2019 Total
Cash at bank	-	-
Total assets	-	-
Other payables	-	-
Total liabilities	-	-
Net assets	-	-

16. Commitments for expenditure

Lease commitments

The group leases the head office building under a non-cancellable operating lease expiring within 3 years. Excess building space is sub-let to third parties under operating leases.

Non-cancellable Operating Leases

Commitments for minimum lease payments in relation to non-cancellable operating leases are payable as follows:

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Within one year	-	1,984,656
Later than one year but not later than 5 years	-	1,840,419
Later than 5 years	-	-
	-	3,825,075

17. Retained surplus

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Retained surplus at the beginning of the year	5,060,691	4,500,754
Adjustment for adoption of AASB 15 and AASB 1058	(2,158,008)	-
Transfer to funds reserve	-	(315,513)
Current year surplus	414,860	875,451
Retained surplus at the end of the year	3,317,543	5,060,691

18. Parent entity financial information

(ACON Health Limited excluding AIDs Council of NSW Inc)

a) Summary financial information

The individual financial statements for the parent entity show the following aggregate amounts:

Balance sheet	2020 \$	2019 \$
Current assets	10,195,929	9,377,489
Total assets	31,055,376	10,295,895
Current liabilities	(26,226,015)	(3,489,187)
Total liabilities	(26,313,807)	(3,727,479)
Stakeholders' Funds		
Total Accumulated Funds	4,410,408	6,568,416
Other comprehensive income	87,633	-
Operating surplus/(deficit) for the year	331,161	875,332

b) Contingent liabilities of the parent entity

The parent entity did not have any contingent liabilities as at 30 June 2020 (30 June 2019 \$nil).

19. Matters subsequent to the end of the financial year

At the time of finalisation of the financial report, COVID-19 has restricted both the business from fundraising activity and had an effect on the overall economy. There is large uncertainty as to the impacts this may have on ACON, and what government assistance will be given.

No other matter or circumstance has arisen since 30 June 2020 that has significantly affected, or may significantly affect:

1. the Group's operations in future financial years, or
2. the results of those operations in future financial years, or
3. the Group's state of affairs in future financial years.

Director's Declaration

In the directors' opinion:

1. The consolidated financial statements and notes set out on pages 7 to 26 are in accordance with the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission Act 2012, including:
 - a) giving a true and fair view of the Group's financial position as at 30 June 2020 and of its performance for the financial year ended on that date; and
 - b) comply with Australian Accounting Standards (including Australian Accounting Interpretations) and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Regulation 2012; and
 - c) There are reasonable grounds to believe that the Group will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.
2.
 - a) the financial statements and notes are in accordance with the Charitable Fundraising Act 1991 (NSW) and the Charitable Fundraising Regulations 1993 (NSW);
 - b) the provisions of the Charitable Fundraising Act 1991 (NSW) and the regulations under this Act and the conditions attached to the authority to fundraise have been complied with; and
 - c) The internal controls exercised by the group are appropriate and effective in accounting for all income received.

This declaration is made in accordance with a resolution of the board, and is signed for and on behalf of the board by:

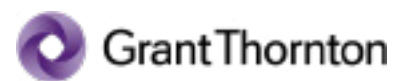


Justin Koonin
President



Andrew Purchas
Vice President

Dated at Sydney this 16 September 2020.



Level 17, 383 Kent Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Correspondence to:
Locked Bag Q800
QVB Post Office
Sydney NSW 1230

T +61 2 8297 2400
F +61 2 9299 4445
E info.nsw@au.gt.com
W www.grantthornton.com.au

Auditor's Independence Declaration

To the Directors of ACON Health Limited

In accordance with the requirements of section 60-40 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, as lead auditor for the audit of ACON Health Limited for the year ended 30 June 2020, I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been no contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.

Grant Thornton

Grant Thornton Audit Pty Ltd
Chartered Accountants

A G Rigele
Partner – Audit & Assurance

Sydney, 16 September 2020

Grant Thornton Audit Pty Ltd ACN 130 913 594
a subsidiary or related entity of Grant Thornton Australia Ltd ABN 41 127 556 389

www.grantthornton.com.au

'Grant Thornton' refers to the brand under which the Grant Thornton member firms provide assurance, tax and advisory services to their clients and/or refers to one or more member firms, as the context requires. Grant Thornton Australia Ltd is a member firm of Grant Thornton International Ltd (GTIL). GTIL and the member firms are not a worldwide partnership. GTIL and each member firm is a separate legal entity. Services are delivered by the member firms. GTIL does not provide services to clients. GTIL and its member firms are not agents of, and do not obligate one another and are not liable for one another's acts or omissions. In the Australian context only, the use of the term 'Grant Thornton' may refer to Grant Thornton Australia Limited ABN 41 127 556 389 and its Australian subsidiaries and related entities. GTIL is not an Australian related entity to Grant Thornton Australia Limited.

Liability limited by a scheme approved under Professional Standards Legislation.



Level 17, 383 Kent Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Correspondence to:
Locked Bag Q800
QVB Post Office
Sydney NSW 1230

T +61 2 8297 2400
F +61 2 9299 4445
E info.nsw@au.gt.com
W www.grantthornton.com.au

Independent Auditor's Report

To the Members of ACON Health Limited

Report on the audit of the financial report

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial report of ACON Health Limited (the "Registered Entity") and its subsidiaries ("the Group"), which comprises the consolidated statement of financial position as at 30 June 2020, and the consolidated statement of comprehensive income, consolidated statement of changes in equity and consolidated statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies and the Directors' declaration.

In our opinion, the financial report of ACON Health Limited has been prepared in accordance with Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, including:

- giving a true and fair view of the Registered Entity's financial position as at 30 June 2020 and of its financial performance for the year then ended; and
- complying with Australian Accounting Standards and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013*.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of our report. We are independent of the Registered Entity in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Information Other than the Financial Report and Auditor's Report Thereon

The Directors are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Registered Entity's annual report for the year ended 30 June 2020, but does not include the financial report and our auditor's report thereon.

Grant Thornton Audit Pty Ltd ACN 130 913 594
a subsidiary or related entity of Grant Thornton Australia Ltd ABN 41 127 556 389

www.grantthornton.com.au

'Grant Thornton' refers to the brand under which the Grant Thornton member firms provide assurance, tax and advisory services to their clients and/or refers to one or more member firms, as the context requires. Grant Thornton Australia Ltd is a member firm of Grant Thornton International Ltd (GTIL). GTIL and the member firms are not a worldwide partnership. GTIL and each member firm is a separate legal entity. Services are delivered by the member firms. GTIL does not provide services to clients. GTIL and its member firms are not agents of, and do not obligate one another and are not liable for one another's acts or omissions. In the Australian context only, the use of the term 'Grant Thornton' may refer to Grant Thornton Australia Limited ABN 41 127 556 389 and its Australian subsidiaries and related entities. GTIL is not an Australian related entity to Grant Thornton Australia Limited.

Liability limited by a scheme approved under Professional Standards Legislation.

Our opinion on the financial report does not cover the other information and accordingly we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial report, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial report or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Responsibilities of the Directors for the financial report

The Directors of the Registered Entity are responsible for the preparation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the ACNC Act. The Directors' responsibility also includes such internal control as the Directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the Directors are responsible for assessing the Registered Entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Directors either intend to liquidate the Registered Entity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

The Directors are responsible for overseeing the Registered Entity's financial reporting process.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Registered Entity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Directors.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the Directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Registered Entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Registered Entity to cease to continue as a going concern.

- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Report on the requirements of the NSW Charitable Fundraising Act 1991 and the NSW Charitable Fundraising Regulation 2015

We have audited the compliance of ACON Health Limited (the "Registered Entity") and its subsidiaries ("the Group") with the requirements of Section 24(2) of the Charitable Fundraising Act 1991 for the year ended 30 June 2020.

Our Opinion

In our opinion:

- ACON Health Limited has properly kept the accounts and associated records during the year ended 30 June 2020 in accordance with the NSW Charitable Fundraising Act 1991 and NSW Charitable Fundraising Regulations 2015 (section 24(2)(b) of the Act);
- ACON Health Limited, has, in all material respects, properly accounted for and applied money received as a result of fundraising appeals conducted during the year ended 30 June 2020 in accordance with section 24(2)(c) of the Act; and
- there are reasonable grounds to believe that ACON Health Limited will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due over the 12 month period from the date of this report (section 24(2)(d) of the Act).

Responsibilities of the Directors under the Charitable Fundraising Act 1991

The Directors of the Registered Entity are responsible for compliance with the requirements and conditions of the NSW Charitable Fundraising Act 1991 and NSW Charitable Fundraising Regulation 2015 and for such internal control as the Directors determine is necessary for compliance with the Act and the Regulation. This responsibility includes establishing and maintaining internal control over the conduct of all fundraising appeals; ensuring all assets obtained during, or as a result of, a fundraising appeal are safeguarded and properly accounted for; and maintaining proper books of account and records. The Directors are also responsible for ensuring the Registered Entity will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to form and express an opinion on the Registered Entity's compliance, in all material respects, with the requirements of the Act and Regulation, as specified in section 24(2)(b), 24(2)(c) and 24(2)(d) of the Charitable Fundraising Act 1991.


Our audit has been conducted in accordance with the applicable Standards on Assurance Engagements (ASAE 3100 Compliance Engagements), issued by the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board. Our audit has been conducted to provide reasonable assurance that ACON Health Limited has complied with specific requirements of the Charitable Fundraising Act 1991 and Charitable Fundraising Regulation 2015, and whether there are reasonable grounds to believe the Registered Entity will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due over the 12 month period from the date of this independent auditor's report (future debts).

Audit procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement. The auditor designs procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances and incorporate the audit scope requirements set out in the Act. The audit procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion on compliance of ACON Health Limited with the Act and Regulations and its ability to pay future debts. Audit procedures include obtaining an understanding of the internal control structure for fundraising appeal activities and examination, on a test basis, of evidence supporting the Registered Entity's compliance with specific requirements of the Act.

and Regulation, and assessing the reasonableness and appropriateness of the Registered Entity's assessment regarding the Registered Entity's ability to pay future debts.

Inherent Limitations

Because of the inherent limitations of any compliance procedures, it is possible that fraud, error or noncompliance may occur and not be detected. An audit is not designed to detect all instances of noncompliance with the requirements of the Act and Regulation, as the audit procedures are not performed continuously throughout the year and are undertaken on a test basis. Whilst evidence is available to support the Registered Entity's ability to pay future debts, such evidence is future orientated and speculative in nature. As a consequence, actual results are likely to be different from the information on which the opinion is based, since anticipated events frequently do not occur as expected or assumed and the variations between the prospective opinion and the actual outcome may be significant.



Grant Thornton Audit Pty Ltd
Chartered Accountants



A G Rigele
Partner – Audit & Assurance
Sydney, 16 September 2020

CONTACTS

Sydney (Head Office)

414 Elizabeth St, Surry Hills NSW 2010
9am-6pm, Mon-Fri
(02) 9206 2000
Freecall: 1800 063 060
acon@acon.org.au
acon.org.au
endinghiv.org.au

Northern Rivers Office

Suite 4P Conway Court,
17 Conway Street, Lismore 2480
9am-5pm, Mon-Fri
02 6622 1555
Freecall: 1800 633 637
northernrivers@acon.org.au

Hunter Office

129 Maitland Rd, Islington NSW 2296
9am-5pm, Mon-Fri
(02) 4962 7700
Freecall: 1800 063 060
hunter@acon.org.au

Southern & Western NSW Outreach

(02) 9206 2114
regionaloutreach@acon.org.au

ACON Pride Training

414 Elizabeth St, Surry Hills NSW 2010
9am-6pm, Mon-Fri
(02) 9206 2000
training@acon.org.au
pridetraining.org.au

Pride Inclusion Programs

414 Elizabeth St, Surry Hills NSW 2010
9am-6pm, Mon-Fri
(02) 9206 2139
info@prideindiversity.com.au
prideinclusionprograms.com.au

Annual Report 2019-2020

© ACON Heath Ltd
Editor: Reg Domingo
Graphic design: Emily Spencer & Kosaku Makino
Printed November 2020





acon.org.au