



## **HERE FOR HEALTH**

ACON Strategic Plan  
2019 – 2024

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Thank you to EY for their generous assistance in developing this plan.

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



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# Overview

## 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

# Introduction



“In the development of the plan, we were faced with a number of challenging questions and have endeavoured to deliver a plan that will best allow us to meet our ongoing commitment to be Here for Health.”

As ACON moves into its 35<sup>th</sup> year and beyond, we have developed a strategic plan which 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.

For our entire history ACON has been of and for the communities we work with. Our early years were defined by community coming together to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in NSW, and as we have grown, we have been proud to work with a diverse range of people to ensure their voice, heart and health needs are represented in the work we do.

We are a fiercely proud community organisation, unique in our connection to our community and in our role as an authentic and respected voice.

This plan has been developed in consultation with community, staff and other stakeholders including funding bodies, service delivery partners and research organisations.

In the development of the plan, we were faced with a number of challenging questions and have endeavoured to deliver a plan that will best allow us to meet our ongoing commitment to be Here for Health.

We recognise that ACON has a long history, and much of that history has been focused on our response to HIV/AIDS and gay men, but in the last few years ACON has worked hard to be here for the health of a much broader spectrum of people in our communities. Research, both from within ACON and externally, shows us that our communities are broad, diverse and intersectional, with a range of under-addressed or unmet

health needs. This strategic plan is reflective of our desire to work across this diversity.

We remain committed to ending HIV for everyone, focusing especially on those communities in which infection rates continue to grow. We will continue to deliver programs that decrease new infections, and will also ensure that ongoing work occurs to sustain these reductions. Our work supporting people living with HIV to live healthy, connected lives remains core to our work.

We are committed to replicating the world class programs, including our campaigns and HIV prevention and care space, to the work we are proudly undertaking with women, both cis and trans, trans men, and gender diverse people. We are partnering with federal, state and local government agencies, corporate Australia and not for profit organisations to ensure

that the health of programs in our communities is carefully considered in funding and policy decisions, and we will deliver programs and services over the course of this plan that impact on the health of our communities and deliver positive outcomes.

For many years, we have used the acronym LGBTI to talk about our work. We have received feedback from the people we work with and for, about the limitations of this term. In this new Strategic Plan, we will refer to people who are sexuality and gender diverse. We feel this term better reflects the people towards whom ACON services are targeted.

The identities of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are not being erased – we will continue to use these terms in programs and services where relevant – we understand the importance of self-determined identities to

those who have fought for and earned them.

Being intersex is distinct from being sexuality or gender diverse. Intersex is about sex characteristics, rather than legal sex, sexual orientation or gender identity. We will stand alongside intersex people as allies, affirming their right to self-determination and supporting the work of peer led intersex networks.

While our work has traditionally been concentrated in New South Wales, recent years have seen us expand, delivering a number of nationwide programs and services. We will continue to explore opportunities to work across Australia, delivering partnership where significant identified community need exists.

This plan supports the ongoing development and transition

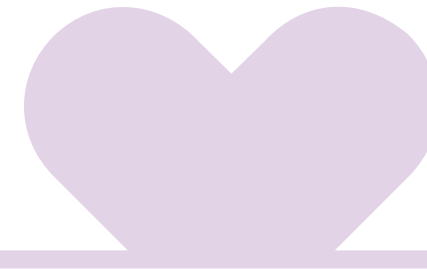
that ACON has been committed to over three decades. It sets out objectives that will ensure we continue to lead the way on ending HIV transmission while also meeting the diverse health needs of our community currently under addressed or not addressed at all.

It sets out objectives that will ensure we are financially sound, able to continue to grow, provide a voice and advocate for our communities. It also provides a mandate for us to explore new programs which will benefit many.

We look forward to working with our communities, our partners and our allies to deliver on this plan. ACON's work is never done in isolation, and the delivery and impact of this plan will only come about through active involvement, support and partnership. We thank you in advance for the role you will have to play in this.



## *Our Health*



“Issues arise from experiences of marginalisation, limited access to sensitive and appropriate health services for sexuality and gender diverse people, and fear of, or experiences of, stigma and discrimination.”

Members of Australia’s sexuality and gender diverse communities experience health disparities when compared to health and wellbeing outcomes experienced by the total population. They may also face significant barriers to accessing traditional healthcare pathways. These issues can be compounded by other factors in a person’s life, such as living with a disability or being from a culturally diverse background.

It is important to note that data about our communities are not

routinely collected in health services across Australia, which brings complexities in determining an accurate and definitive description of the issues experienced by our communities.

Where data are collected and evidence exists, significant disparities are identified in sexual health, cancer screening, smoking prevalence, mental health prevalence and rates of illicit substance use between our communities and the broader Australian population.

In part, these issues arise from experiences of marginalisation, limited access to sensitive and appropriate health services for sexuality and gender diverse people, and fear of, or experiences of, stigma and discrimination.

Certain cohorts within our communities require access to very specific health services. Gender-affirming healthcare for transgender and gender diverse people is very limited, and where it is provided, there are often long wait times and high costs.

## *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:



We are *community* made, and recognise our leadership role in the history and future of who we work for.



We work in *collaboration*, respecting the unique experience, expertise and skills of our communities, partners and stakeholders.

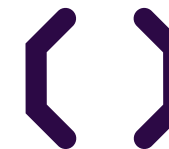


We remain *informed*, and rely on evidence, lived experience and consultation to make the best choices possible.

## Our values inform how we work with people:



We are committed to *equity*, noting that everyone faces unique barriers when creating a healthy life for themselves.



We demonstrate *inclusion*, working with people who may experience exclusion and ensuring their meaningful involvement in our work.



We show *compassion*, knowing that individual experiences within our communities are diverse, and may be marked by stigma and discrimination.

## Our values inform how we make decisions:



We strive for *excellence*, recognising our contribution to our communities' health and the organisation's potential for improvement.

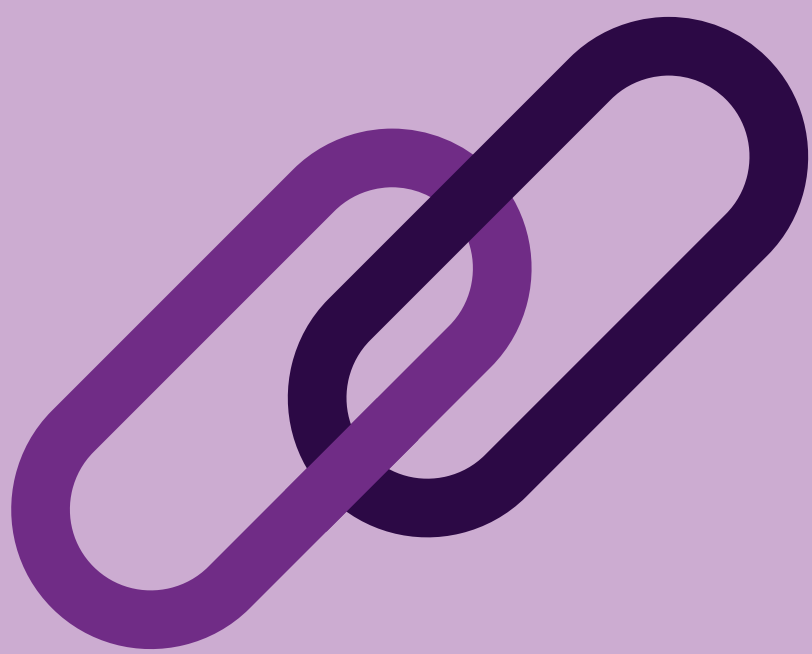


We show *courage*, recognising the need for strong leadership and honesty in overcoming challenges.



We encourage *innovation* to respond effectively to the changing needs of our communities.





# Our Communities



“We are part of communities that include people whose gender identity, sexuality, or bodies have been politicised and shamed when they should be celebrated and cared for.”

Most people in our communities live happy, healthy and connected lives. Unfortunately this is not the case for everyone.

We work for people living with HIV and people who are sexuality and gender diverse, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and/or queer.

We are part of communities that include people whose gender identity, sexuality, or bodies have been politicised and shamed when they should be celebrated and cared for.

We also recognise the peer led networks and organisations that work for some members of our communities and respect

the importance of community led responses.

We acknowledge that the health needs of all the people ACON serves are not the same, but we share a common fight against stigma and discrimination that affects our health.

We know that the identities, paths and experiences of all people in our communities are shaped by a multitude of factors, including their cultural identities, where people live and socio-economic background.

We recognise that members of our communities share their sexual and gender identity with other identities and

experiences and work to ensure that these are reflected in our work. These can include people who are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- people who use drugs
- mature aged people
- young adults
- people with disability

We know that how our communities define and describe themselves change, and we strive to ensure that all people we work for feel welcomed by the services we offer and the language we use.

# *Our Work Is Focused On*



## **FOCUS AREA 1**

Ending HIV transmission for all in our communities

## **FOCUS AREA 2**

Delivering excellent, client-centred care and innovative community health programming

## **FOCUS AREA 3**

Giving voice to our communities and strengthening inclusion

## **FOCUS AREA 4**

Developing financial diversity, strength and growth

## **FOCUS AREA 5**

Building a workplace that attracts and develops the best people

FOCUS AREA 1

# 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

FOCUS AREA 2

# Delivering excellent, client-centred care and innovative community health programming

2.1

We support PLHIV 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 establishment of an LGBT Health Centre

FOCUS AREA 3

# Giving voice to our communities and 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

FOCUS AREA 4

# Developing financial diversity, strength and 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



FOCUS AREA 5

# Building a workplace that attracts and 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

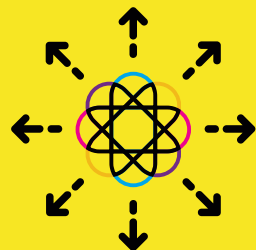
# How We Work



ACON has a strong international reputation and has developed considerable expertise in community mobilisation, social marketing, online engagement strategies, peer education, partnership, and policy and advocacy.



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.



New opportunities exist to expand ACON's programs to meet emerging health issues and these will be explored throughout the life of this plan.





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