

**WE'RE
HERE
FOR
HEALTH**

2021-2022

A N N U A L

R E P O R T





Photo: Deep Field Photography



OUR PURPOSE

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



ABOUT OUR COVER

The cover of the ACON Annual Report 2021-2022 features the Progress Pride Flag which in more recent times has been adopted by a growing numbers of people and organisations worldwide.

Designed by US-based non-binary artist Daniel Quasar in 2018, the flag includes the six colours of the original Rainbow Flag along with the addition of extra stripes: black and brown stripes to represent people of colour; and pink, pale blue and white stripes to include trans and gender diverse communities. The added colours are formed in an arrow shape to confer forward movement and progress.

The increasing use of this flag reflects the broad drive in Australia and around the world to be more inclusive of the expansive breadth of identities within our communities.

As the language we use and our communities evolves, so do the symbols we use. As such, ACON is proud to add the Progress Pride Flag to the mix to ensure that we are an organisation that represents and reflects our unique and diverse communities.

ACON acknowledges Daniel Quasar as the designer of the Progress Pride Flag. We thank them for allowing ACON to use the design as we serve our communities.



ABOUT US

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 voices 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 other 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.



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

P R E F A C E

CONTENTS

PREFACE

ABOUT / CONTENTS	4
OVERVIEW	
HIGHLIGHTS 2021-2022	6
WELCOME	
PRESIDENT / CEO MESSAGE	8
INSIGHT	
OUR STRATEGIC PLAN	10

FOCUS AREA 1

ENDING HIV TRANSMISSION FOR ALL IN OUR COMMUNITIES	12
HIV PREVENTION	14
HIV CAMPAIGNS	18
HIV & SEXUAL HEALTH	20
HIV TESTING	23
RESPONDING TO MPXV	26

FOCUS AREA 2

DELIVERING EXCELLENT, CLIENT-CENTRED CARE AND INNOVATIVE COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAMMING	28
COVID SUPPORT	30
LGBTQ+ HEALTH	32
ACON HEALTH CENTRE	36
HIV SUPPORT	38
MENTAL HEALTH	40
ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUGS	42
DOMESTIC & FAMILY VIOLENCE	44

FOCUS AREA 3

GIVING VOICE TO OUR COMMUNITY AND STRENGTHENING INCLUSION	46
POLICY, STRATEGY & RESEARCH	48
SAFETY, INCLUSION & JUSTICE	50
HEALTHY AGEING	54
TRANS HEALTH EQUITY	56
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY	57
REGIONAL SERVICES	58
PRIDE INCLUSION PROGRAMS	62

FOCUS AREA 4

DEVELOPING FINANCIAL DIVERSITY, STRENGTH AND GROWTH	64
FINANCE OPERATIONS	66
FUNDRAISING & PHILANTHROPY	68

FOCUS AREA 5

BUILDING A WORKPLACE THAT ATTRACTS AND DEVELOPS THE BEST PEOPLE	70
ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	72
RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN	76
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	78
OUR SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM	80
OUR BOARD	82
FINANCIAL REPORT	84
CONTACT US	112

HIGHLIGHTS: 2021-2022

ACON is here to improve the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ people and people living with HIV. Here is a snapshot of our key achievements in 2021-2022.

RESPONDING TO MONKEYPOX (MPXV)

We played a key role in the NSW response to the MPXV outbreak. Working collaboratively with NSW Health and other partners, we engaged our communities in prevention strategies through education and awareness initiatives and implemented the vaccination program.

➤ Read more on page 26

IT'S YOUR TICKET TO RIDE

As we emerged out of lockdown and restrictions were eased, ACON's Ending HIV large-scale HIV prevention campaign *Test Now – It's Your Ticket to Ride* reminded our communities to put testing for HIV and STIs back on the radar.

➤ Read more on page 18

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES' WELLBEING

Demand for our client services continues to increase. In 2021-2022, we delivered 13,875 occasions of services across our client, support, counselling and mental health programs. Our staff are continuing their work to support the health and wellbeing of our communities.

➤ Read more on page 40

ACON HEALTH CENTRE PROGRESSES

We have commenced planning on the ACON Health Centre after it received funding from the NSW Government as part of its NSW LGBTIQ+ Health Strategy. The ACON Health Centre will become a centre of excellence for sexuality and gender diverse healthcare in NSW.

➤ Read more on page 36

DEMAND REMAINS HIGH FOR A[TEST]

ACON's a[TEST] Oxford Street, our community-based rapid HIV and STI testing facility, continues to record high demand. The service remained operational throughout the year, including during the NSW lockdown between June to October 2021, recording over 4,900 clients and over 7,000 tests.

➤ Read more on page 23

ADDRESSING HIV STIGMA

Our campaign on tackling HIV stigma took an innovative approach by celebrating allyship and focusing on the role people who are HIV negative play in addressing the issue. *It's Time to Think Positive About HIV* calls on the broader community to confront HIV stigma together.

➤ Read more on page 38

REDUCING THE IMPACTS OF CANCER

We launched *This Could Be The One*, our smoking cessation campaign developed in partnership with the Cancer Institute NSW. It was among a range of initiatives we undertook this year to reduce the impact of cancer among sexuality and gender diverse communities.

➤ Read more on page 32

BUILDING RESILIENCE WITH TRANS VITALITY

We continued to deliver *Trans Vitality*, ACON's capacity and resilience-building, and suicide prevention program developed and delivered by peers. The program is among a range of initiatives delivered by our Trans Health Equity unit, which works to support the health and wellbeing of trans and gender diverse people.

➤ Read more on page 56

UNVEILING THE BONDI MEMORIAL

The Bondi Memorial, a public artwork dedicated to victims and survivors of LGBTQ hate and violence, was finally installed and unveiled this year. The public launch in June 2022 marked the culmination of a multi-year collaboration between ACON and Waverley Council.

➤ Read more on page 52

SPOTLIGHT ON HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

We launched *Healthy Relationships*, an innovative campaign which took a strengths-based intersectional approach to exploring domestic and family violence. The campaign reached over 14 million people, engaging people from LGBTQ+ communities as well as those in broader populations.

➤ Read more on page 44

ADVOCATING FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

We continued to advocate for our communities on a range of issues including on ending HIV transmissions, addressing HIV stigma, achieving greater health equity and delivering justice outcomes for those impacted by historical violence.

➤ Read more on page 48

STRENGTHENING INCLUSION

We continued to support workplaces, sporting organisations and health and wellbeing service providers on all aspects of LGBTQ inclusion through our range of training and consultancy programs and services.

➤ Read more on page 62

FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

2021-2022 has been a year fraught with uncertainties for many in our communities. As we learned to live with COVID, devastating floods wreaked havoc across the state, particularly in the Northern Rivers. The federal election heightened negative public discourse about our communities, especially about trans and gender diverse people, causing distress and anxiety. And a new viral infection – monkeypox – that was impacting mostly gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men loomed large.

As our communities confronted these challenges, ACON played an essential role in providing support and delivering effective interventions to ensure the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ people and people with HIV.

We pay tribute to all our staff and volunteers for their efforts to support and safeguard our communities' health and wellbeing. Through their dedication and hard work, we are meeting our strategic objectives and fulfilling the organisation's purpose of "creating opportunities for people in our communities to live their healthiest lives".

We continued to execute our strategy to end HIV transmissions for all in our communities. Over the course of the year, HIV notifications continued to fall. This decline in diagnoses is encouraging but it has also been driven by the ongoing effects of COVID, including restricted movement, altered health-seeking behaviour, lower levels of casual sex activity and testing, and altered service provision and access.

As we adjust to life in a post-pandemic world, ACON will continue to work with the NSW Ministry of Health and other partners in re-engaging our communities with health services, HIV testing programs and prevention strategies such as PrEP.

Delivering excellent, client-centred care and innovative community health programming is a key strategic focus for ACON. This year, we continued to deliver initiatives and make inroads in health areas such as mental health, alcohol and other drugs, domestic and family violence, ageing, community safety, cancer prevention and LGBTQ health.

We also made progress towards our objective of realising a dedicated state-wide health facility specifically designed for sexuality and gender diverse people. We thank the NSW Government for committing funding towards its establishment and for their ongoing support for our communities' health and wellbeing.

On our strategic focus area on giving a voice to our communities and strengthening inclusion, we achieved many important outcomes. Throughout the year, our teams in policy and advocacy, trans and gender diverse health, healthy ageing, safety and inclusion, and training and consultancy continued to deliver programs and services to meet the needs of our communities.

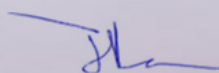
Among the key pieces of work in this focus area has been to support those in our communities that have been impacted by historical violence. This year, as we continued to advocate for truth and justice outcomes, we also heralded the completion of the Bondi Memorial, a public artwork dedicated to victims of LGBTQ hate and violence. We commend Waverley Council for their partnership with this project over many years and thank them for their support in building a monument of remembrance, healing, hope, strength and justice.

Developing financial diversity, strength and growth is critical to our operations and sustainability. Our continued focus on prudent financial management and disciplined execution puts us in a good position. In the coming year, we will continue to explore funding opportunities and bolster fundraising activities as we move through a COVID normal environment.

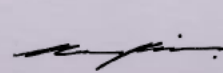
We remain committed to building a workplace that attracts and develops the best people. Indeed, many of the outcomes and achievements detailed in this report are only possible because of our staff, board, members, volunteers, partners and supporters. We offer our sincerest thanks and appreciation to all of them their drive, energy, commitment and support for ACON.

We thank our many sector partners, other not-for-profit organisations, corporations, and other federal, state and local government agencies for their ongoing partnership and support. We particularly pay tribute to the NSW Government for their steadfast commitment to improving the health outcomes of LGBTQ people and people living with HIV.

Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to our clients and community members for their ongoing support and friendship. We take inspiration from your passion, strength, resilience, courage, tenacity and pride.



Dr Justin Koonin
ACON President



Nicolas Parkhill
ACON CEO



OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

Released in 2019, the *ACON Strategic Plan* sets out our purpose, vision, values and priorities. Developed in consultation with community, staff and other stakeholders including funding bodies, service delivery partners and research organisations, the plan maps our strategic direction as we work to improve the health and wellbeing of people of diverse sexualities and genders. We continue to work with our communities, our partners and our allies in fulfilling objectives outlined in the plan to deliver better health outcomes for our communities.

Initially running from 2019-2022, the ACON Board agreed in June 2022 to extend the life of the existing plan for an additional two years, recognising that the plan remains current and clearly articulates ACON’s strategic outlook. As a result, it is now the *ACON Strategic Plan 2019-2024*.

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 FOCUS AREAS

- 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



Read the *ACON Strategic Plan 2019-2024* at www.acon.org.au

OUR VALUES

Our values inform who we are:

- COMMUNITY**
We are community made, and recognise our leadership role in the history and future of whom we work for.
- COLLABORATION**
We work in collaboration, respecting the unique experience, expertise and skills of our communities, partners and stakeholders.
- INFORMED**
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:

- EQUITY**
We are committed to equity, noting that everyone faces unique barriers when creating a healthy life for themselves.
- INCLUSION**
We demonstrate inclusion, working with people who may experience exclusion and ensuring their meaningful involvement in our work.
- COMPASSION**
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:

- EXCELLENCE**
We strive for excellence, recognising our contribution to our communities’ health and the organisation’s potential for improvement.
- COURAGE**
We show courage, recognising the need for strong leadership and honesty in overcoming challenges.
- INNOVATION**
We encourage innovation to respond effectively to the changing needs of our communities.



Photo: Steve Christo

FOCUS AREA 1

OUR WORK IS FOCUSED ON

Ending HIV transmission for all in our communities

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

IN THIS SECTION

- HIV Prevention
- HIV Campaigns
- HIV & Sexual Health
- HIV Testing
- Our Monkeypox Response



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 to 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 safe sex packs every year throughout NSW.

NSW HIV DATA

In 2021-2022, NSW made further progress towards the virtual elimination of HIV transmission. Data from the NSW Ministry of Health show that HIV notifications continued to decline with January to March 2022 being the lowest quarter result on record. During this time, 30 NSW residents were newly diagnosed with HIV, a 54% drop compared to the five-year average for the same period. Of these, 18 were gay men and men who have sex with men, which was 65% fewer when compared to the average of the previous five years.

In 2021, the number of NSW residents newly diagnosed with HIV (178) decreased by 36% compared to the average for 2016-2020. Of these, gay men and other MSM accounted for 135 diagnoses, which was a 38% reduction on the five-year average. This decline in diagnoses is encouraging. But it is important to note that it is also likely to have been driven by the ongoing effects of COVID, including altered health-seeking behaviour, lower levels of casual sex and testing, and altered service provision and access.

It is also important to note that while we are seeing decline in HIV notifications among gay men and MSM in inner Sydney where over 20% of adult men are estimated to be gay, outer suburban and regional MSM living in areas with lower concentrations of gay-identified men have not experienced the same level of declines with 66% of the diagnoses in January to March 2022 compared to 17% in inner Sydney. ACON is continuing to develop and implement strategies and initiatives to engage gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men (GBMSM) outside inner Sydney on HIV prevention and testing, including those in Western Sydney and regional NSW.

From January to December 2021, there were 541,800 HIV serology tests performed in NSW. Testing in publicly funded sexual health clinics and peer-based community testing sites, such as ACON's a[TEST] Oxford St, remained high and well targeted. Between January and March 2022, testing at these facilities increased by 8% compared to the previous quarter. ACON's Ticket to Ride campaign was among a series of initiatives focused on increasing the frequency of getting tested for HIV among gay men and other MSM.

PrEP initiation fell sharply during the July to September 2021 quarter, during the height of the NSW COVID lockdown, but rose significantly when restrictions were lifted the following quarter, growing by 61% with 1081 people going on PrEP between October and December 2021. PrEP use continued to recover with initiation rates increasing 3% in January to March 2022.

Starting HIV treatment early provides great health benefits and stops onward transmission. It can also help people achieve an undetectable viral load (UVL). Of the people newly diagnosed during January to June 2021, the median number of days between diagnosis and treatment was 15 days. Of those on treatment, 90% had an undetectable viral load by the 6-month follow-up.

Overall, the proportion of people living with HIV with UVL remained high in NSW. Between October and December 2021, UVL was reported in 98% of people 40 years and older, 96% of people aged between 30-39, and 95% of people aged 30 years and under.

ACON continues to work with NSW Health and other partners in engaging all groups at risk of HIV transmission, in HIV prevention, testing and care messaging and services, as well as ensuring greater and earlier uptake of treatment among those living with HIV.

ENDING HIV

ACON's award-winning community education and mobilisation initiative Ending HIV continues to educate gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men on what they can do to help prevent new HIV transmission in NSW. Since its launch in 2013, we've improved our communities' understanding on the importance of frequent HIV testing, the effectiveness of HIV prevention strategies such as PrEP, the benefits of starting HIV treatment early and having an undetectable viral load. This year, we continued to promote Ending HIV's key messages of staying safe, treating early and testing often through our large-scale campaign, digital marketing initiatives, online forums, peer education workshops and other activities.

Through the Ending HIV platform, we have also been able to deliver important messages and information on other emerging health issues such as COVID, and more recently, monkeypox.

Ending HIV continues to generate strong community engagement across our various activities as well as through our Ending HIV website and associated digital platforms. We had over 772,000 unique visitors, over 1.1 million pageviews and over 22,000 connections across our social media.

EMEN8

Emen8 is our national digital HIV prevention and sexual health resource for gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men, produced in partnership with Thorne Harbour Health. It is funded by the Australian Department of Health.

The digital platform adopts an innovative approach to health promotion by developing content that appeals to the target audience and is underpinned by evidence-based HIV and STI prevention strategies. The platform harnesses the power of social media, and leverages community connections and social influence to amplify sexual health and wellbeing messages.

In the past year, improvements were made to the platform to enhance functionality and improve the user experience and engaging original content were

produced and uploaded frequently. A dedicated hub of important HIV and sexual health information translated into Simplified Chinese, Thai and Spanish has also been added.

Engagement with *Emen8* continues to grow with new user increasing by 71% to nearly quarter of a million (227,000). More recently, it passed a project milestone, having reached over a million pageviews.



Photo: Steve Christo

SNAPSHOT: 2021-2022

Safe sex packs: We distributed 68,597 safe sex packs (condoms and lube) to venues and clinics across NSW.

Peer-run workshops: We conducted 20 peer education workshops across NSW on HIV, safe sex and risk reduction.

Community forums: We convened 7 community forums relating to HIV and STI prevention across NSW.

Digital interactions: We recorded 1,427,555 digital interactions relating to HIV and STI prevention, HIV testing and HIV treatment through our various channels and platforms.

Health promotion resources: We engaged a high number of venues, promoters and services to display our health promotion services.

A graphic with the word 'FOCUS' in white letters on a dark blue background, and the number '1' in white on a red background.

18 ACON ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

The campaign landing page and campaign-related blog posts acquired 12,715 pageviews. Users visited these pages for an average of 2:36 minutes, indicating an engaged audience interested in the content.

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, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

PEER EDUCATION WORKSHOPS ON HIV & SEXUAL HEALTH

ACON's Peer Education Team delivers education workshops and forums to gay, bi+ and men who have sex with men (cis and trans) on a range of topics around HIV prevention, sexual health, relationships and community connection. This year we reached 409 community members through our online sessions and face-to-face workshops such as 'Looking For Mr Right' and 'Finding Mr Right Now', as well as various community outreach activities and events.

HIV & SEXUAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR ASIAN GAY QUEER MEN

Engaging gay, bisexual and queer men (cis and trans) from Asian cultural backgrounds on HIV, STIs and sexual health remains an important focus of our health promotion work. ACON's Asian Gay, Bi+ and Queer Men's Project continued to deliver a range of initiatives to engage people from these communities. Among them were 'Get Me PrEP', an interactive virtual forum on PrEP, and COVID Chat, and online session on staying healthy during the lockdown. Both were designed specifically for Chinese-speaking men. Volunteers also held 38 events – virtual and in-person – as part of *SocialisAsians*, which aims to bring together Asian gay, bisexual and queer men and connect them with health resources and information.

ENGAGING YOUNG GAY, BISEXUAL & QUEER MEN ON SEXUAL HEALTH

ACON's project for young gay, bisexual and queer men (cis and trans) – SPARK – continued to provide vital support, education and health information. Throughout the year, the project delivered various education workshops including 'Adult Themes', which explores HIV, sexual health and hooking up safely online, and 'Starting Out', an online social session designed to

connect participants and engage them on sexual health and wellbeing. The project also delivered the Youth History Walk as part of the Sydney Mardi Gras festival and provided health promotion activities at the Minus18 Sydney Queer Formal, the CALD Gay Men's Action Group, Rainbow Cultures and Play Safe.

CONNECTING WITH LGBTQ ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

ACON's Aboriginal Project aims to engage LGBTQ people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on HIV, STIs, health and wellbeing through a range of initiatives. In partnership with BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation and other health sector partners, we held 'U and Me Can Stop HIV', an event held during Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HIV Awareness Week. At Mardi Gras, we engaged with communities at Fair Day and at the Mardi Gras Parade through coordination of the First Nations Float. The project also assisted in efforts to engage and mobilise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on COVID vaccination drives. This year, we're proud to welcome Jinny-Jane Smith as ACON's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Programs Team Leader and look forward to strengthening ties and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTQ communities.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITY GROUPS WITH HEALTH INFORMATION & RESOURCES

ACON's Community Partnership Grants Program provides small grants to community groups to help promote key ACON health messages and information. In 2021-2022, ACON partnered with 32 community groups – both in Sydney in regional NSW – ranging from LGBTQ sporting clubs, culturally and linguistically diverse community groups, support groups for mature aged people and trans and gender diverse people, and smaller event organisers. A total of \$34,500 was distributed through the program.

FOCUS AREA 1



PARTNERING WITH WEST BALL TO ENGAGE WESTERN SYDNEY & MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES ON HIV & SEXUAL HEALTH



This year ACON teamed up with The West Ball, an annual ballroom event that brings together queer communities in Western Sydney, to develop a HIV and sexual health initiative that specifically supports queer and trans people of colour. We co-designed a micro digital campaign on HIV prevention, testing, treatment and stigma featuring community members connected to The West Ball and the Western Sydney region. Targeting people living in Blacktown, Liverpool, Penrith and Campbelltown, the social media campaign reached over 31,000 people and received over 96,000 impressions online. With the support of South-West Sydney Local Health District, ACON's pop-up HIV testing site at The West Ball in June conducted eight dried blood spot tests and 18 STI tests.

PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE ENGAGED IN SEXUALISED DRUG USE

People engaged in sexualised drug use are a high risk group for STIs and HIV. Engaging this community is an important part of our health promotion work. Our M3THOD project provides support to people who use drugs in combination with sex. The project has been devised and led by peers with lived experience. This year, we provided 25 peer sessions by telehealth and in-person. To enhance service awareness, the M3THOD team delivered 11 in-service presentations to sexual health partner organisations and stakeholders. This project is in the process of developing a community-centred campaign and a new peer-led workshop to be launched in 2022-2023.

SEXPERTS: DELIVERING HIV PREVENTION & SEXUAL HEALTH INFO & RESOURCES TO OUR COMMUNITIES

ACON's Sexperts program, delivered in partnership with sex-on-premises venues (SOPVs), provides sexual health promotion focusing on testing, HIV prevention and risk reduction. The program was impacted by COVID restrictions from July to October 2021. It returned in November following the easing of restrictions. Since then, the program delivered 48 shifts and recorded 96 hours at SOPVs. This outreach comprised a total of 156 occasions of service with community members, who received information on combination prevention, PrEP and undetectable viral load, as well as testing, PEP and general sexual health. In June, Sexperts held a sexual health education session at Sydney SOPV 357. The workshop was designed to allow participants to learn how to be safe.

PLAYZONE: SUPPORTING SOPVS TO PROVIDE SAFE SPACES FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

PLAYZONE is a project based on a Code of Practice agreed to by ACON and SOPVs to provide safe spaces for our community members. Across Sydney, seven venues signed the Code of Practice, working collaboratively with ACON. ACON provided promotional and educational sexual health materials to SOPVs to ensure that our messaging on HIV prevention and risk reduction reaches community members in safe and effective environments.



Providing health resources and risk reduction messages at the Sydney Mardi Gras Parade. Photo: Steve Christo



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, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM) about the importance of testing more regularly are important areas of focus for our approach to HIV prevention.

ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITIES ON HIV TESTING DURING & AFTER LOCKDOWN

Throughout 2021-2022, ACON continued to engage gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM) on the importance of getting tested regularly for HIV and STIs. This was particularly vital with the lifting of restrictions in October 2021, which saw people return to socialising and engaging in more casual sex.

According to data from NSW Ministry of Health, HIV testing rates in NSW continued to recover in the past year but still remained lower than pre-pandemic levels. This is largely due to the impact of restrictions in movement, which led to lower levels of casual sex activity, altered health-seeking behaviour and reduced service capacity, especially between June to September 2021 when NSW was in lockdown. Over the year, the overall number of HIV serology tests performed in NSW was 541,800.

Testing in publicly funded sexual health clinics and peer-based community testing sites, such as ACON's a[TEST] Oxford St, remained high and well targeted. Testing at these facilities increased by 8% during the January to March 2022 quarter compared to the previous year.

To raise awareness of HIV and STI testing and prompt GBMSM to get a sexual health screen post-lockdown, ACON implemented a large-scale social marketing campaign *Test Now – It's Your Ticket To Ride*. The campaign highlighted the various ways to get a HIV test. The campaign was distributed in various media across NSW including social media, outdoor media, video, online dating applications, print, cinema and radio.

We continued to promote the importance of regular HIV and STI screening – over the course of the year, we recorded over 650,000 online interactions around HIV and STI testing.

ACON is continuing to work with NSW Health and our other partners to ensure HIV testing messages and services are reaching our communities.

ACON'S a[TEST]: NSW'S MOST POPULAR COMMUNITY-BASED TESTING SERVICE

ACON's a[TEST] Oxford Street continued to provide rapid HIV and STI testing for GBMSM delivered by peers in a community-based setting. The service remained operational throughout the year, including during the NSW lockdown between June to September 2021. Demand for the service remained high, recording over 4,900 clients and over 7,000 HIV tests. It remains the state's most popular community-based testing facility for GBMSM.

As well as HIV and STI screenings, clients at a[TEST] are also given access to sexual health information and resources. The service further acts as an active referral pathway into other ACON services such as counselling peer education workshops and more.

In June 2022, after being closed for two years due to the pandemic, a[TEST] Surry Hills re-opened, operating for two days a week. The a[TEST] Chinese Clinic, a specialised service for Chinese-speaking GBMSM, also resumed service, operating every Thursday at a[TEST] Surry Hills.

a[TEST] Oxford Street, a[TEST] Surry Hills and a[TEST] Chinese Clinic would not be possible without the support of our clinical partner, the Sydney Sexual Health Centre. We acknowledge their partnership and thank them for the ongoing support.

Our other a[TEST] sites in Kings Cross and Newtown remain closed due to clinical capacity.

HUNTER, NORTHERN RIVERS & REGIONAL OUTREACH: HIV TESTING IN REGIONAL NSW

Crucial to efforts towards the virtual elimination of HIV transmission is getting GBMSM in regional areas to

test more often. Throughout the year, ACON continued efforts to engage our communities on HIV and STI testing through our regional offices and outreach service.

In Newcastle, ACON continued to collaborate with Hunter New England Sexual Health to provide a free, drop-in HIV and STI testing service. In 2021-2022, the bi-weekly clinics provided 206 appointments to 146 clients. We also teamed up with Pacific Clinic and Newcastle Pride to host a pop-up HIV and STI clinic at Yass at the Lass in April. Approximately 7,000 resources promoting online HIV testing services were distributed in regional NSW.

In the Northern Rivers, we worked with a range of partners towards the establishment of an a[TEST] service based at its Lismore office. However, work towards this project has been put on hold due to ongoing recovery efforts from the flood emergency. ACON remains committed to providing a[TEST] services to the area as soon as possible.

We also continued to provide HIV and sexual health outreach across the Southern and Far West NSW, providing community members in those regions information and resources on HIV testing, STI screenings, as well as sexual health, PrEP and PEP.

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES TO TEST FOR HIV AT HOME

Key to getting more people to test for HIV is providing more HIV testing options, such as the ability to conduct self-tests.

ACON's you[TEST] service allows GBMSM to test for HIV at home. It provides users with access to a HIV self-test kit and to a virtual peer, who walks them through the process and provides them with sexual health information and resources. Clients that accessed this service were from the Greater Sydney region as well as regional NSW.

While HIV self-test kits had been approved for use in Australia since 2019, access to it was limited to direct orders from the manufacturer or AIDS councils. In December, HIV self-test kits were finally approved to be sold in pharmacies. At Mardi Gras Fair Day, a[TEST] peers engaged our communities on HIV self-testing and distributed around 200 HIV self-test kits.

We also continued to support NSW Health's Dried Blood Spot (DBS) test service. The DBS test allows people to test for HIV at home and send off dried blood samples by mail for laboratory testing. Throughout the year, we continued to include DBS testing information in our health promotion activities including online resources, peer education workshops and through various other projects including our Needle & Syringe Programs.



ACON is here for testing ... a[TEST] Oxford Street.
Photo: Reg Domingo



ACON peers at a MPXV vaccination hub in Sydney help ensure service delivery is culturally-appropriate and community-focused. Photo: Reg Domingo

RESPONDING TO MPXV



ACON continues to work with the NSW Ministry of Health and other partners to develop and implement strategies to prevent the transmission of monkeypox (MPXV).

BACKGROUND

Monkeypox, or MPXV, is a viral infection that causes a rash and is spread by very close contact with someone with MPXV, including during sex.

Since May 2022, there has been a global increase in cases reported from multiple countries where MPXV is not usually seen, including Australia. Most of the cases are in gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men (GBMSM).

Throughout the outbreak, ACON has been working closely with NSW Health and our other partners to ensure our communities remained informed. Through close collaboration and partnership, we continue to implement strategies to prevent transmission and minimise the spread of MPXV in NSW.

COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

From the onset of the outbreak, ACON has engaged in a range of engagement strategies to equip our communities with the latest information on MPXV. These include:

- Developing online information pages covering symptoms, risk reduction, prevention strategies and vaccinations
- Publishing media releases on MPXV cases, public health alerts and the vaccination program
- Creating social media resources to inform our communities of case numbers, how to reduce risk of infection and updates on vaccines
- Hosting an online information forum on MPXV with health experts for community members
- Distributing e-newsletters on MPXV to our subscribers
- Placing health messages in local LGBTQ media
- Printing MPXV resources to distribute to LGBTQ venues and sex-on-premises venues (SOPVs)
- Supporting SOPVs in delivering risk reduction and health and safety messages
- Supporting a research project led by The Kirby Institute and the Centre for Social Research in Health to better understand community responses to MPXV
- Sharing resources and messaging with AIDS councils across Australia

SUPPORTING THE VACCINATION PROGRAM

ACON has been working closely with NSW Health in the rollout of the MPXV vaccination program. This includes:

- Giving guidance in the development of the online vaccine portal
- Developing communications material to notify our communities of the rollout
- Keeping our communities informed of updates as they come to hand
- Working with clinicians from South Eastern Sydney Local Health District and other LHDs on the establishment of vaccination hubs
- Providing peers to vaccination hubs to ensure service delivery is culturally-appropriate and community-focused

As more vaccines arrive and eligibility is expanded, ACON will continue to work with NSW Health, Local Health Districts and other partners to ensure our communities, particularly those most at risk, can access the MPXV vaccination program.

PARTICIPATING IN THE PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE

ACON's experience in engaging and mobilising GBMSM – the population at most risk of contracting MPXV – has been essential to NSW's MPXV prevention efforts. We commend the NSW and Federal Governments for their swift and comprehensive response. We are committed to continue working with the health officials, clinicians, researchers and community in stopping the spread of MPXV in NSW.

LOOKING AHEAD

The situation with MPXV is still evolving. ACON, in partnership with NSW Health and other sector partners, continues to develop strategies to prevent MPXV transmission in NSW, expand vaccine access and support those most at-risk of MPXV infection. We thank our communities for their vigilance and efforts to protect their health and the health of their partners.



F O C U S
A R E A **2**

Imagery from CAN WE's This Could Be The One campaign.
Read more on page 34

OUR WORK IS FOCUSED ON

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

- We support people living with HIV to live fulfilled, healthy lives in which they are active members of their community.
- We ensure that our care and support services are of an excellent standard through ongoing needs assessment, co-design, inclusive marketing and ongoing evaluation.
- We ensure that our communities are actively and meaningfully included in our work and within our organisation.
- 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.
- We examine innovative ways to meet the health needs of our communities where they are at, including the establishment of an LGBTQ+ Health Centre.

IN THIS SECTION

- COVID support
- LGBTQ Health
- ACON Health Centre
- Mental Health
- HIV Support
- Alcohol & Other Drugs
- Domestic & Family Violence



Providing support to our communities during COVID.
Photo: Reg Domingo

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES THROUGH COVID

The ongoing COVID pandemic continued to have an impact in 2021-2022, especially when restrictions on movements and gatherings were in place. We supported our communities during those difficult periods by providing a range of support services, developing and promoting health and safety messages and encouraging people to get their COVID vaccinations.

The impacts of COVID continued to be challenging for us all, particularly during the 2021 lockdowns. During this time, ACON continued to support our communities, particularly those most vulnerable, through our programs and services.

LGBTQ people already experience heightened levels of distress such as anxiety and depression, which are exacerbated during periods of lockdown. When stay-at-home orders were mandated in NSW from July to October 2021, ACON continued to provide mental health and counselling support to our communities through telehealth and video. During this time, we produced and distributed a range of messages on managing self-care and staying resilient.

To provide our communities with further mental health support, we convened an online forum that focused on coping strategies and staying strong during the pandemic. The forum featured a panel of diverse presenters comprising psychologists, social workers and artists.

While home visits were suspended during the lockdown, our home-based care team continued to provide support through welfare check-ins and catch ups via video or phone.

Our Weekly Meal Service also had to be suspended during lockdown. In response, we provided home deliveries for vulnerable community members that access this service.

In December 2021, we delivered hampers to members of LGBTQ+ multicultural communities that were impacted by the pandemic. The Multicultural Community Food Assistance Program was a partnership between ACON, Multicultural NSW and several multicultural LGBTQ community groups including Antra, Sydney ARCO IRIS

Latin American & Hispanic Community, SheQu, Sydney Queer Muslims and Trikone Australia.

While many sexual health clinics were closed, we continued to operate a[TEST] Oxford Street to provide our communities access to HIV and STI screening. We also provided gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men with support on accessing HIV self-testing devices such as the Dried Blood Spot test or self-testing kits.

During the 2021 COVID lockdown, a big focus of the public health response was encouraging people to receive the COVID vaccine. In support of this endeavour, we produced a range of messages encouraging people in our communities to get vaccinated. These messages were distributed across social media and local LGBTQ media. To expand their reach, messages were translated in several languages including Simplified Chinese, Thai, Spanish and Arabic.

To provide our communities with further information, we hosted an online forum hosted by TV presenter and journalist Patrick Abboud. *Vaccinate with Confidence* featured a range of health experts who provided important and timely information about COVID vaccines.

In support of NSW Health's efforts to reach specific population groups for the vaccine program, ACON engaged our communities with targeted messaging including trans and gender diverse people, and LGBTQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As we learn to live with COVID, ACON will continue to be flexible in our approach so that we are able to respond swiftly to the impacts of the pandemic. We will continue to work with the NSW Government, partners and our communities in ensuring we all remain COVID safe.

LGBTQ+ HEALTH

We're here to help LGBTQ+ people in NSW take control of their health by providing information and range of sexual health testing services, cancer awareness campaigns, workshops, as well as support services.

NSW LGBTQ+ HEALTH STRATEGY 2022-2027

In March, the NSW Government launched the state's first ever *LGBTIQ+ Health Strategy*, marking a milestone step forward sexuality and gender diverse communities. The Strategy's aim to improve the provision of care for LGBTQ+ people is a critical step towards improving our communities' health and wellbeing into the future.

The Strategy has been built on the voices, experiences, and insights of over 1,600 LGBTQ+ people across the state and more than 750 NSW Health staff. ACON provided substantial advice and feedback during the development of the strategy.

The priorities for NSW Health on addressing LGBTQ+ health for the next five years, as outlined in the Strategy, are:

1. Deliver high quality, safe, inclusive and responsive care
2. Respond to the health needs of transgender and gender diverse people in NSW
3. Respond to the health needs of intersex people in NSW
4. Capture data on sexuality, gender and intersex variations at the point-of-care and population level

The strategy includes a \$12 million investment to help improve health outcomes for LGBTQ+ communities. Among the initiatives to receive funding is the ACON Health Centre, which will deliver primary care, GP, mental health, sexual health and cancer screening services for sexuality and gender diverse communities.

ACON commends the NSW Government for its leadership and commitment to improving and strengthening the health of our communities. We look forward to working with the NSW Government and other partners and stakeholders on both the implementation of the Strategy and the establishment of the ACON Health Centre.

ACON CANCER PROGRAMS

We continued to work with the Cancer Institute NSW, as part of our multi-year partnership, to reduce the impact of cancer among sexuality and gender diverse communities in NSW. The partnership seeks to increase screening participation and reduce cancer risk among LGBTQ people through community engagement and targeted health promotion.

Highlights in 2021-2022 included:

- The *Get Your Kit Together* bowel cancer screening campaign ran from June to August 2021. It successfully communicated that bowel cancer screening is integral for all LGBTQ people aged 50 -74 years and helped raise awareness of Australia's *National Bowel Cancer Screening Program*. The campaign achieved high recall with over 90% of survey respondents correctly identifying a campaign message. Most survey respondents (55%) reported using kits received. But awareness was not translating to use for some LGBTQ women, highlighting the need to increase research and engagement.
- Cancer Institute NSW, BreastScreen NSW and NSW Quitline staff completed LGBTQ diversity and inclusion training. We've now tailored the training for cancer services, which will be available nationally through the Cancer Institute NSW's *eviQ* Learning platform.
- In November, the Australian Government announced that self-collection would be available to the public in the *National Cervical Screening Program*. This change removes barriers to screening for many in our communities. We also provided advice on including LGBTQ people in the updated cervical screening guidelines. We produced digital resources to raise awareness, which were promoted through our social media channels.
- The *NSW Cancer Plan 2022-2027* was launched in April with a stronger focus on equity. Our partnership with the Cancer Institute NSW has contributed to this. However, recognition of specific needs of LGBTQ+ people in cancer policies and programs at the national



Photo: Deep Field Photography

level is still lacking. We have made submissions to consultations on the *National Cancer Plan* and the *National Tobacco Strategy*, and will continue to provide advice and make representations to try and increase recognition of LGBTQ communities in these important policies and processes.

ACON'S CANCER PREVENTION RESOURCE, CAN WE

We've continued to build *CAN WE*, ACON's dedicated cancer screening and prevention resource designed specifically for sexuality and gender diverse communities. Launched in 2021, *CAN WE* was developed in partnership with the Cancer Institute NSW.

This year, we launched a new interactive tool on the *CAN*

WE website (canwe.org.au) that informs community members about which cancer screenings programs they should take part in. We also published a broad range of content on cancer screening and prevention, as well as on global initiatives such as World Cancer Day to help raise awareness of our cancer programs.

We participated in community engagement events, hosting *CAN WE* stalls at Fair Day at Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and the Women's Health Expo at the Royal Botanic Gardens. We engaged community members with cancer prevention resources and information, further extending the reach of *CAN WE*.

And this year, we launched a new cancer prevention campaign, *This Could Be the One* (see entry, next page).

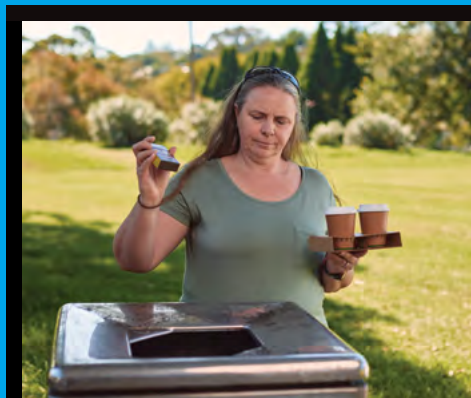
THIS COULD BE THE ONE

In June, we launched *This Could Be the One*, a campaign aimed at encouraging LGBTQ people who smoke to make an attempt at quitting, or continue with their attempts to quit. Tailored specifically for sexuality and gender diverse communities, the campaign acknowledges the challenges of quitting smoking and celebrates the hope that the next attempt to quit could be the one.

Research show smoking rates have declined in Australia including among LGBTQ communities. But disparities remain with sexuality and gender diverse people still having higher smoking rates than the general population. This campaign sought to contribute to a decrease in smoking rates among all LGBTQ people in NSW.

Developed with the support of Cancer Institute NSW, the campaign features diverse LGBTQ community members in a range of situations where cigarette cravings can be high and encourages people who smoke to make an attempt at quitting. Importantly, the campaign directs people to support options to assist them to take this important step.

Along with a video, *This Could Be the One* was featured out-of-home advertising across NSW, including in regional areas, in print, digital, social media and radio.



Taking it one day at a time.

Every quit smoking attempt gets you closer to quitting for good. This could be the one. Visit: CANWE.ORG.AU/WECANQUIT



LGBTIQ WOMEN'S HEALTH CONFERENCE RETURNS

On 4 November 2021, we hosted the fifth iteration of the LGBTIQ Women's Health Conference. Because of the pandemic, the conference was held online. Presented in partnership with Thorne Harbour Health, the conference drew around 350 delegates.

The program reflected the conference's theme – 'Our Health Matters' – with the keynote presentation delivered by the research team behind *UnLEASH*, Australia's first longitudinal cohort study exploring lesbian, bisexual and queer women's health and wellbeing and the relationship with smoking, drinking and using drugs.

It featured around 30 speakers from a range of services, organisations and lived experiences, covering topics as diverse as homelessness, inclusive therapeutic practices, drug and alcohol use, supporting LGBTIQ women with an intellectual disability, inclusion in sport, suicide prevention, sex work, and domestic and family violence.

It hosted live panel discussions on inclusion, mental health, healthcare experiences, rainbow families, and suicide prevention.

Holding the conference online allowed for much greater accessibility and a higher capacity for presenters and speakers to participate in the program. Sessions were captioned and available to view on-demand after the conference.



We look forward to continuing to work with Thorne Harbour Health in shining a spotlight on LGBTIQ women's health at the next conference to be held in Melbourne in 2023.

SYDNEY WOMEN & SEXUAL HEALTH SURVEY

The Sydney Women and Sexual Health (SWASH) survey is an important research project for ACON, which helps to inform our programs and policy work around LGBTIQ women's health. Run in partnership with the University of Sydney, it provides a biennial snapshot on issues such as sexual and gender identity, sexual health, mental health, violence, tobacco and drug use, alcohol consumption, cancer screening behaviours and more. ACON coordinates the data collection, which was collected during the 2022 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras festival period. Due to COVID restrictions, survey recruitment was conducted online, resulting in significant engagement. This year, SWASH collected 2932 survey responses – the highest ever received.



Photo: Steve Christo



ACON at the release of the NSW Government's
NSW LGBTQ+ Health Strategy. Photo: Reg Domingo

THE ACON HEALTH CENTRE

We're here to improve the health and wellbeing of sexuality and gender diverse communities. We examine innovative ways to meet the health needs of our communities where they are at, including the establishment of a Health Centre.

In March, the NSW Government announced it will invest \$4.2 million towards the establishment of the ACON Health Centre, an integrated health service that will coordinate and provide service provision to LGBTQ+ communities in NSW. Following years of planning, the aim is to provide primary care as well as a range of specialist health services, with the support of a number of partners. Funding for the Health Centre was among other key initiatives announced by the NSW Government with the release of the *NSW LGBTQ+ Health Strategy*.

THE ACON HEALTH CENTRE: HOW IT BEGAN

ACON has been discussing the idea of a specific Health Centre for our communities for many years. After identifying the need for such a service, ACON initially developed a business case, followed by a detailed feasibility study, with the assistance of

PricewaterhouseCoopers and a high-level health sector working group.

The feasibility study included consultation with LGBTQ+ community leaders and members across NSW, key community stakeholders, healthcare providers, Local Health Districts and Networks, the Central and Eastern Sydney Primary Health Network, Aboriginal Medical Services, officials in federal and state health departments, GPs that specialise in gender-affirming care, and governing bodies like the RACGP, researchers and academics.

The study concluded that investment from the NSW Government to establish a LGBTQ+ focused Health Centre could be sustainable, and that providing an integrated care model would help address health disparities for LGBTQ+ communities, improve access to appropriate services and provide an opportunity to develop local research and data.

OUR VISION FOR THE ACON HEALTH CENTRE

The ACON Health Centre will deliver care specifically for LGBTQ+ people across a wide range of health services, state-wide. It will be a safe, inclusive, person-centred, integrated health service designed for sexuality and gender diverse people in NSW to respond directly to the health and wellbeing needs of LGBTQ+ communities. By providing more services within the same location, ACON hopes to retain people in care, see more referrals followed up and assist our communities to navigate the health system more effectively.

The centre will provide primary care and GP services alongside specialist services such as mental health, sexual health and HIV, gender affirming healthcare, alcohol and other drug support, and other services for sexuality and gender diverse people.

The centre will be multi-disciplinary, integrated, peer-led and community-driven. We will be utilising decades of experience and feedback from communities about what they value in the services we provide to tailor the centre's offerings – a trusted community health service delivered for, and by, the community.

THE NEED FOR A LGBTQ+ FOCUSED HEALTH CENTRE

LGBTQ+ communities experience significant health disparities when compared to the general population in Australia due to a number of systemic and societal factors. These include significantly elevated levels of mental health issues, much higher rates of suicide, elevated rates of illicit drug use, smoking and risk drinking, and a lack of sensitive and appropriate care options contributing to less help seeking in a range of areas.

Our communities also endure frequent delays to accessing healthcare, often because of a lack of sensitive and appropriate care able to meet the needs of sexuality and gender diverse people. This is especially so for trans and gender diverse people.

There is also an absence of, or lack of visibility in, research and data collection. This means the health needs of LGBTQ+ communities are far less

well understood, impacting policy and program investments and government decision making – which can perpetuate service access issues.

And undergraduate training in LGBTQ+ health is lacking across almost all areas of health professional training which means that finding an informed health professional is difficult.

The ACON Health Centre will help to improve the provision of healthcare to LGBTQ+ people across NSW, help increase the knowledge and capacity of health service professionals across NSW, and contribute to improved health service access for sexuality and gender diverse communities.

NEXT STEPS

ACON is now working closely with the NSW Government, NSW Health, health organisations, research bodies and community partners to implement our plans for the Health Centre. The implementation is in the early stages and in the coming year we will continue to work collaboratively with our partners and stakeholders towards the establishment of the ACON Health Centre.

THANK YOU & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACON acknowledges the funding from the NSW Government, and particularly the support of NSW Health Minister Brad Hazzard, as well as NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet, NSW Treasurer Matt Kean, and Independent MP for Sydney Alex Greenwich. We are very grateful for their support.

ACON also acknowledges the commitment, guidance and expertise of the ACON Health Centre Advisory Group, consisting of representatives from Sydney Local Health District, St. Vincent's Health Network, Central and Eastern Sydney Primary Health Network, The Kirby Institute and the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, along with members of the ACON Board, in the design of the ACON Health Centre and the development of the feasibility study. ACON also acknowledges PricewaterhouseCoopers for its valuable assistance in conducting the feasibility study.

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 workshops, one-on-one peer support, counselling support groups, meals, care coordination, home-based care and health retreats.

PEER SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV

ACON continues to offer peer support to gay, bisexual and queer men (cis or trans) living with HIV. These services help men recently diagnosed or living longer with HIV make sense of topics such as accessing quality care and HIV treatments, managing HIV disclosure, building resilience, responding to stigma and finding social connection. In partnership with Positive Life NSW, we delivered two a[STARTx] workshops for 12 men newly diagnosed with HIV. ACON also delivered 64 one-on-one peer sessions for men living with HIV. Peer support workers continue to offer care in English and a range of other languages.

COUNSELLING & CARE COORDINATION SUPPORT FOR PLHIV

ACON is here to ensure people living with, affected by or at risk of HIV can easily access support for their mental health and wellbeing. This includes free counselling as a priority service for people living with HIV. This year we provided 810 counselling occasions of service to people living with HIV. This includes 65 counselling occasions of service to individuals who were newly diagnosed with HIV.

Our Care Coordination Service continued to assist people living with HIV experiencing multiple and complex needs. These needs may include mental health, suicidal crisis, sexual, domestic and family violence, alcohol and/or drug use, financial/legal matters, or housing stress. Our Care Coordinators work closely and collaboratively with clients and other allied health professionals ensuring access to appropriate healthcare and support services. This year, the Care Coordination Team delivered 963 care coordination occasions of service to 74 people living with HIV.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT NETWORK

The Community Support Network, or CSN, provides much needed practical support for older people living with HIV. Through this program, our trained team of volunteers deliver practical assistance to help people with HIV live as independently as possible in

their homes. Services include helping with household chores, grocery shopping, meal preparation and gardening. The program was impacted heavily during the 2021 lockdowns with volunteer visitors being unable to provide support to their clients. During this time, staff and volunteers continued to undertake welfare check-ins by phone. This year 66 clients accessed the CSN service with 37 volunteers providing around 800 hours of support.

MEAL SERVICE: PROVIDING ACCESS TO FOOD & PROVISIONS

ACON provides access to food and provisions to people living with HIV through our Weekly Meal Service in Surry Hills. The aim of this service is to provide vulnerable community members with up-to-date information and freshly cooked healthy meals, and to facilitate social connections and reduce isolation. The service was suspended during the 2021 lockdown. However, during these times we organised for hot meals to be delivered to the homes of some of our most vulnerable older clients living with HIV alongside regular phone check-ins to provide social support. As the lockdown restrictions eased, we shifted to takeaway meal options and managed to maintain an average of 25 meals per week. The service resumed in-person gatherings in June 2022. Over the course of the year, we served 462 meals.

COURTNEY ACT & ENDING HIV STIGMA

On World AIDS Day, ACON published two community videos with drag star Courtney Act designed to create empathy and reduce HIV stigma. In the first video, Courtney discussed the concept of U=U (or undetectable equals untransmittable), which refers to someone living with HIV who is on effective HIV treatment and cannot pass on HIV to a sexual partner. The second video had Courtney discussing how to be a better ally to people living with HIV, aligned with ACON's ongoing messaging to reduce HIV stigma. The two videos achieved broad reach, recording over 63,000 views across Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.



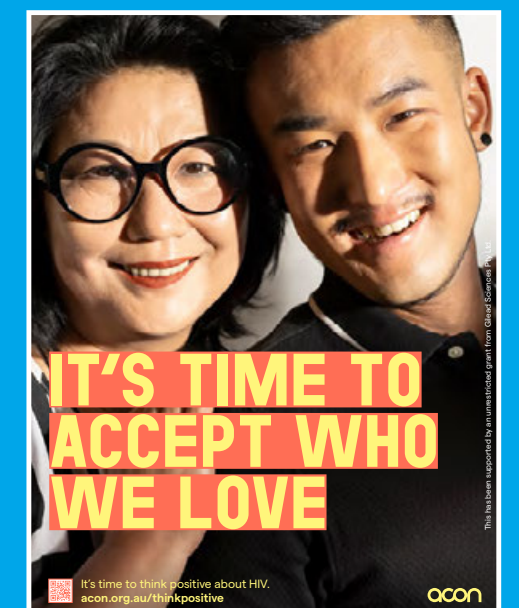
IT'S TIME TO THINK POSITIVE ABOUT HIV

This year ACON launched *It's Time to Think Positive About HIV*, an innovative campaign addressing HIV stigma. Rather than focus on the harms of HIV stigma, *Think Positive* celebrates HIV allyship and calls on the broader community to confront HIV stigma together. The campaign had a strong focus on featuring, and reaching, people who are HIV negative.

Staff living with HIV led the conceptualisation, development and delivery of the campaign aligned with best practice and linked to global principles of ensuring greater and more meaningful involvement of people living with HIV. Featuring community members, *Think Positive* provides a blueprint to challenge HIV stigma through an uplifting, strengths-based message that celebrates allyship.

To complement the campaign, we launched a skills-building resource called *It's Time to Think Positive About HIV – A Practical Guide*

to *Being a Better HIV Ally*, produced with support from Positive Life NSW. This work accelerated ACON's efforts to engage people who are HIV negative to create an all-of-community approach to ending HIV stigma.





ACON is here for mental health.
Photo: Reg Domingo

MENTAL HEALTH

While many LGBTQ+ people in NSW lead happy, healthy and productive lives, there are a range of issues relating to poorer mental health outcomes, such as depression, self-harm, anxiety and suicidality, which impact on 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 and peer services, and a care coordination program for people with complex needs.

COUNSELLING 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. This year, our counsellors provided over 2,955 occasions of service via face-to-face and telehealth. Many of these sessions include a component of HIV prevention and sexual health counselling. Of these, 340 service occasions were

delivered by fully qualified volunteer counsellors who are crucial to our service delivery. Investing in the training and development of volunteer counsellors enables ACON to build sector capacity in providing LGBTQ+ affirming mental health services.

CARE COORDINATION FOR LGBTQ+ PEOPLE

Our Care Coordination Service provides support to community members experiencing a range of health,

personal and social issues. People may need support with mental health issues, sexual, domestic and family violence, substance use or support with gender affirmation. Others may also be experiencing suicidal crisis and require prevention support or aftercare services. Through our Care Coordination Service, clients with multiple and/or complex needs are teamed up with an allied health professional for up to three months to assist them to build a care plan, access relevant healthcare and support services and increase their ability to manage their care and treatment. This year we provided over 4,980 care coordination occasions of service to sexuality and gender diverse people.

SUICIDE PREVENTION AND AFTERCARE

Research has shown that people from sexuality and gender diverse communities are at elevated risk of suicide and suicide attempts and are more likely to experience situational distress than the general population. ACON's Suicide Prevention and Aftercare service supports community members experiencing an immediate suicidal crisis or requiring assistance following a suicide attempt. This year we delivered 1,282 counselling occasions of service to 104 people in NSW. This service was funded by the NSW Ministry of Health.

PEER WORK

This year, we launched a new service for sexuality and gender diverse communities that links those needing support with trained peers with lived experience. Our peer workers provide support based on mutual lived experience and connection with clients through their own previous challenges. Peer workers can help people experiencing mental distress, experiencing suicidal thoughts or following a suicide attempt. This free and confidential non-clinical service acts as an alternative to, or addition to, ACON's other services. In 2021-2022, we provided 625 peer work occasions of service.

PRIDE COUNSELLING

Pride Counselling is ACON's fee-based counselling service for sexuality and gender diverse community members in NSW. Pride Counselling provides support on a range of issues including coming out, gender and sexuality, gender affirmation, healthy relationships, grief and loss, depression, anxiety, stress, trauma, workplace issues and planning for the future. As Pride Counselling is a social enterprise, all income generated by the service is reinvested back into ACON's health programs and services. Since its launch, Pride Counselling has recruited a team of psychologists and mental health social workers, developed referral



pathways, and has increased service access throughout the year. This year, 1,290 sessions were delivered by the Pride Counselling team.

NORTHERN RIVERS FLOOD CRISIS SUPPORT

Lismore in the Northern Rivers region of NSW was devastated by floods in February and March 2022. To support people in our communities impacted by the flood emergency, ACON launched a crisis support service, which provided immediate debriefing, counselling and care coordination support to LGBTQ+ and people living with HIV. Through this service, we provided assistance to 13 community members who were directly impacted by the floods. Much of this support focused on sourcing immediate needs such as food, housing, clothes and petrol, and providing crisis counselling support.

RAINBOW MENTAL HEALTH LIVED EXPERIENCE NETWORK

The Rainbow Mental Health Lived Experience Network (RMHLEN) is a group of people from sexuality and gender diverse communities with lived experience of mental distress. The network currently includes 29 people from across NSW, including Sydney, Western Sydney, Hunter, South Coast, Northern Rivers, and Murrumbidgee regions. This year, ACON facilitated four consultations with RMHLEN members to identify gaps, needs and experiences of suicide prevention and mental health resources. The network has also contributed to services in the broader mental health sector to increase their engagement with LGBTQ people in co-design, consultation work and focus groups.

MENTAL HEALTH MONTH & MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS AWARDS

ACON continued to partner with Way Ahead to support Mental Health Month and the Mental Health Matters Awards. The Mental Health Matters Rainbow Inclusion Award for 2021, sponsored by ACON, was awarded to Trans Pride Australia's Friday Night Socials, recognising the importance of social connection for mental wellbeing.

ALCOHOL AND 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.

HARM REDUCTION MESSAGES DURING MARDI GRAS

Each year, in the lead up to the Sydney Mardi Gras season, ACON develops and implements a micro harm reduction campaign. Funding by NSW Health, this year's campaign was disseminated in LGBTQ venues, and print media, digital media and social media including online hook-up apps. Its implementation was particularly timely, given many community members resumed socialising at the Mardi Gras season after two years of restrictions. The impacts of lockdown and reduced socialising on drug tolerance underscored the importance of messaging around how to reduce related harms. As well as featuring AOD harm reduction messages, this year's campaign also had information on COVID safety and sexual consent.

PIVOT POINT: HARM REDUCTION DIGITAL RESOURCE

Pivot Point is ACON's online hub for reducing harms associated with AOD use for LGBTQ communities. It features information on how to reduce harms associated with AOD use, helpful strategies on reducing use or quitting, a self-assessment tool for visitors to gauge the risk of their AOD use, and a comprehensive service directory for further support. Among the content added this year included articles on partying safely during lockdown, ACON's peer support initiatives and public drug warnings and alerts. In 2021-2022, Pivot Point recorded over 175,000 visitors, an increase of 29% compared to last year.

NEEDLE & SYRINGE PROGRAM

Through ACON's Needle & Syringe Program (NSP), we provide free sterile injecting equipment and health promotion services to people who inject drugs. People who use this service can also get connected to advice, support and relevant health resources, referral to other services and access to condoms. Provision of the NSP helps to reduce the transmission of blood borne viruses such as HIV and Hep C and other injecting related risks. Our services in Sydney, Newcastle and Lismore were impacted by the COVID lockdowns in 2021, while Lismore was further affected by the flood crisis in 2022. This year, we distributed 494,504 units

of equipment across our network. Our NSP also recorded an uptake of Naloxone, a life-saving drug that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose with 121 units dispensed. Satisfaction with our NSP is high with surveyed respondents giving the service top ranking on experience (4.7 out of 5) and on equipment needs (4.7 out of 5).

SUBSTANCE SUPPORT COUNSELLING

Most LGBTQ people and people living with HIV who use AOD do so in a non-problematic way, but some require support. ACON's Substance Support counsellors deliver person-centred treatment approaches to help people to better manage their use, cut down or quit their use of substances, and to improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing. Funded by Central Eastern Sydney Primary Health Network and the NSW Ministry of Health, this year we provided over 1,850 occasions of service to 164 people.

AOD RESEARCH

This year, we continued to support AOD research conducted by partner agencies. The team supported five AOD research projects in an advisory and community liaison capacity in 2021-2022. ACON also led on the implementation of two drug use studies for LGBTQ+ people. The *GHB Cultures Practices and Experiences Study* interviewed 31 people from sexuality and gender diverse communities about their GHB use. So far this study has produced one published manuscript and a short video summary of findings. Results have been showcased at four AOD sector webinars, and informed ACON's AOD harm reduction campaigns. ACON is also co-leading the implementation of the *M3THOD Study*. This study, delivered in partnership with the Kirby Institute, St Vincent's Hospital Sydney, Sydney Sexual Health Centre, NADA, and Positive Life NSW, has now enrolled over 100 participants. One peer reviewed paper addressing peer programs for GBMSM has been published from the M3THOD Study. And ACON also developed, in partnership with the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, a PHD scholarship that will explore the intersections of mental health, AOD and the trans experience.



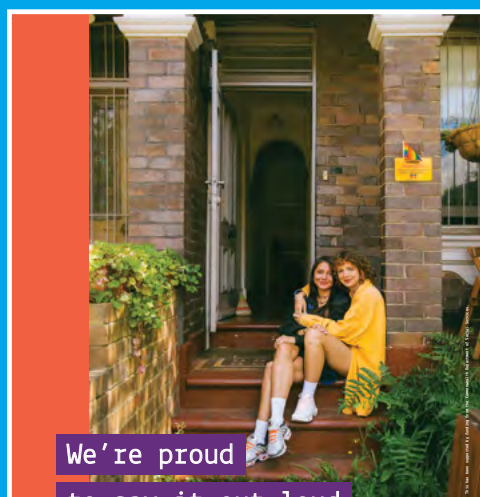
ACON is here to provide AOD support and reduce harm.
Photo: Reg Domingo

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

In December 2021, we implemented an awareness-raising campaign, *Healthy Relationships*, which took a strengths-based intersectional approach to prevent violence in our relationships. The multimedia campaign celebrated real-life LGBTQ+ relationships that challenge a range of norms and are healthy and happy. In doing so, the campaign sought to address the drivers of, and the social conditions and attitudes that contribute to, intimate partner and sexual violence.

The campaign included films and imagery, which were promoted across social, print and outdoor media. It had a very broad reach and was seen by people from LGBTQ+ communities as well as those in broader populations. This aimed to contribute to normalising the representation of LGBTQ+ identities and relationships throughout mainstream society, a key tenet in primary prevention.

The campaign reached over 14 million people with funding extended for the 2022-2023 financial year. The project was funded by the Commonwealth Department for Social Services.



We're proud
to say it out loud

Speaking out for healthy relationships:
sayitoutloud.org.au



DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE



We're here to help LGBTQ+ people who have experienced domestic and family violence (DFV) by providing a range of resources and support services to address issues specific to our communities.

DOMESTIC & FAMILY VIOLENCE PROJECT

People of diverse sexualities and genders are just as likely as people in the general population to be involved in an abusive intimate and/or family relationship. However, they are less likely to identify it in their relationships, report it to police or seek support from mainstream DFV services, and when they do they are less likely to find support services that meet their specific needs. ACON's DFV Project continues to work to support people in our communities impacted by DFV. Our primary activities in this area include client support, counselling, referrals to specialist legal and court support and victims compensation, social marketing campaigns and awareness-raising activities, research, resource development, capacity building, policy development and advocacy.

RESPONDING TO DFV DURING COVID

During the pandemic, ACON experienced a substantial increase in people accessing our DFV support website, *Say It Out Loud*, and our counselling and care coordination teams managed a high number of clients presenting with sexual and DFV as a primary concern. The Department of Communities and Justice continued our funding in to 2021-2022 to deliver specialist DFV counselling and case management support. In total this funding enabled us to provide 923 occasions of service to 52 clients. ACON will be seeking further funding to continue and expand this program of support.

SAY IT OUT LOUD: NATIONAL DFV DIGITAL RESOURCE

ACON's *Say It Out Loud* website is the only national DFV digital resource for LGBTQ+ people, professionals and allies. It is delivered in partnership with various state and territory services, following a national rollout in 2020. Since then, engagement and reach have grown steadily.

There was a 65% increase in overall pageviews following the launch of *Say It Out Loud*'s major campaign

(see *Healthy Relationships* campaign) between December 2021 and May 2022. A page on warning signs, which offers a checklist for relationship red flags, saw a 1,805% increase in pageviews over the same period from 181 to 3,449. An online quiz – 'Are you in a healthy relationship?' – also saw a 106% increase in pageviews over the same period, rising from 590 to 1,214.

The website recorded its highest number of users in May 2022 since its launch, coinciding with LGBTQ Domestic Violence Awareness Day. *Say It Out Loud* has created a safe and inclusive space for LGBTQ+ people to seek support, information and services.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE TOOLKIT LAUNCHED

We expanded our *Say It Out Loud* website to include a toolkit to support our communities with information about how we can contribute to respectful, consent focused cultures and support people who have experienced sexual violence. Research conducted by ACON and other organisations consistently shows that LGBTQ+ people more often disclose experiences of sexual violence to our peers, rather than to professionals. ACON developed this toolkit so that our communities can be confident in their understanding of sexual violence, consent, and how to respond to disclosures or if they are worried about a friend. The toolkit was made possible by funding from the NSW Department of Communities and Justice.

PROUD PARTNERS PROGRAM

This year, ACON ran its third Proud Partners program, a 10-week therapeutic group program for LGBTQ people concerned about their behaviours in a relationship. Our program had a 100% completion rate and positive feedback from participants. The program supports LGBTQ+ people to better understand behaviours such as a lack of respect, controlling conduct or aggression. The program has been made possible by funding from the NSW Department of Communities and Justice.

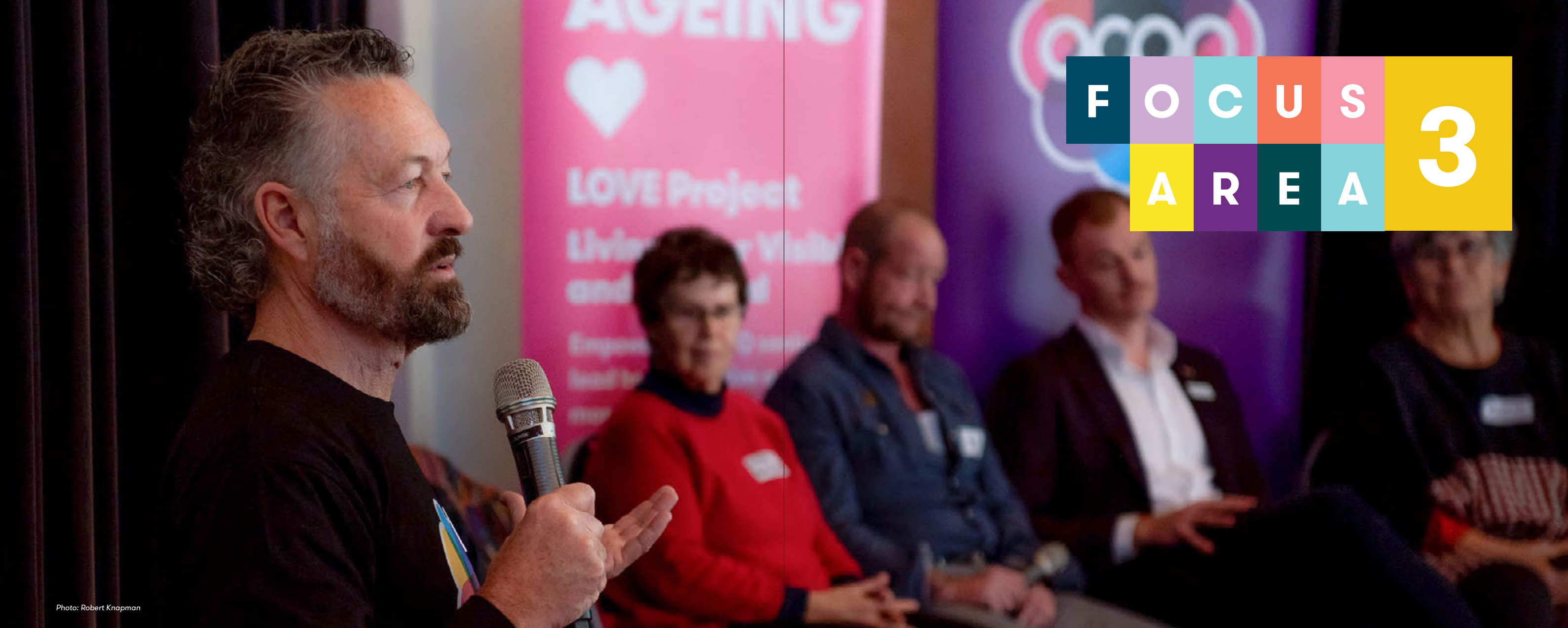


Photo: Robert Knapman

FOCUS
AREA 3

OUR WORK IS FOCUSED ON

Giving voice to
our community &
strengthening inclusion

- 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.
- 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.
- We advocate for the meaningful inclusion, support and participation of our communities and the reduction of discrimination and stigma.
- We build strong partnerships and exemplify and share best practice models for inclusion and participation.
- We participate in and support research and strive for a strong evidence base to inform decisions made about our communities' health.

IN THIS SECTION

- Policy, Strategy & Research
- Safety & Inclusion
- Healthy Ageing
- Trans & Gender Diverse Health
- LGBTQ+ Disability
- Regional NSW
- Pride Inclusion Programs
- Training & Consultancy

SYDNEY GAY COMMUNITY PERIODIC SURVEY

This year marked the return of face-to-face recruitment for the Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey (SGCPS) at Fair Day. Delivered in partnership between ACON, UNSW's Centre for Social Research in Health, the Kirby Institute, Positive Life NSW and the NSW Ministry of Health, the SGCPS is an annual cross-sectional survey of gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men recruited in community sites in Sydney and online throughout NSW. The survey aims to provide data on sexual practices, drug use, transmittable infections. In total, 2,453 participants completed the 2022 survey. ACON arranged face-to-face recruitment by trained peers at Mardi Gras Fair Day and online advertising on Facebook and Grindr.

Photo: Steve Christo

POLICY, STRATEGY AND RESEARCH

We're here to work with legislators, policy and decision-makers, researchers and service providers to help them understand and address the health needs of sexuality and gender diverse people, and people living with HIV.

IMPROVING POLICY RESPONSES TO END HIV

Ending HIV transmissions and HIV stigma remain at the core of our policy work. To reach virtual elimination, we know that NSW's world-leading responses must continue to innovate and adapt to a changing epidemic. This year, we produced several major policy papers: *Needle and Syringe Programs in NSW: Opportunities for Innovation* (June 2022); *Long-acting injectables for HIV treatment and prevention* (April 2022); and *'It's Who We Are': Exploring the Role, Impact and Value of Peers* (October 2021). We also continued to advocate with our community partners against the *Mandatory Disease Testing Act*.

In light of the evolving HIV landscape, we provided feedback to several strategy and guideline documents to ensure that policies reflect our communities' health needs and diversity. These include the *NSW STI Strategy*, *ASHM's Australian STI Management and National Post-Exposure Prophylaxis Guidelines*, and the WHO's guidance on *Differentiated PrEP service Delivery and Long-Acting Injectable Cabotegravir for HIV Prevention*.

Across all this work, we endeavoured to bring an intersectional perspective on health issues affecting our communities. Our advocacy work continued to be

strengthened by working with our key partners in the health and HIV sectors and driven by the ongoing need for equity in health care.

ADVOCACY TO IMPROVE LGBTQ+ RIGHTS AND HEALTH EQUITY

Our advocacy for greater health equity continued in 2021-2022. Alongside our partners from other community organisations, we contributed to the development of NSW and Australian Government strategies, including the *NSW Hepatitis C Strategy 2022-2025*, the *NSW Women's Strategy*, the *Australian Cancer Plan 2023-2033*, and the *National Tobacco Strategy 2022-2030*.

We produced a range of submissions seeking policy improvements for equal rights and greater health equity on a range of issues including workplace gender equality, religious discrimination, voluntary assisted dying, primary health services to metro, rural and regional Australia, racism, alcohol and other drugs, homelessness amongst older people, crisis communications for multicultural communities and domestic and family violence.



ACON FORUM ON NSW LGBTQ+ HEALTH STRATEGY

In June, we hosted a forum at the NSW Parliament House titled 'Improving the Health of Our Communities & Advancing the NSW LGBTQ+ Health Strategy'. The forum was held to increase awareness of LGBTQ+ health issues and build support for the *NSW LGBTQ+ Health Strategy* across the NSW health sector, the LGBTQ+ community and NSW parliamentarians. Over 50 parliamentarians, policymakers and health leaders attended.

RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Research is key to improving the health of our communities. It helps us better understand our communities' needs, design effective programs and advocate for policy change to improve health outcomes.

Our existing research partnerships with the University of Sydney, UNSW's Centre for Social Research in Health, UNSW Kirby Institute, and Western Sydney University, have generated crucial surveillance data and insights that help us adapt HIV and LGBTQ health responses.

We also produced ACON's *Research Priorities Statement* to guide our research efforts and the development of new partnerships. Our focus is on ensuring the projects we support have the greatest benefit for our communities and relevance to our programs.

We believe that people in our communities should be meaningfully included in research – from the choice of research topics to recruitment, analysis, and community feedback. To ensure that this occurs, ACON's Research Ethics Review Committee reviewed and provided advice to 26 research projects from 16 research institutions.

We held six research forums on a range of topics including HIV and sexual health, trans and gender diverse people's wellbeing, workplace inclusion, mental health, alcohol and other drugs, and peer interventions.

BETTER DATA, BETTER SERVICES

We continue to improve client data collection and reporting back to community. This year, we produced a data report on the reach of ACON's services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members. The report helped us identify areas of strengths, as well as gaps that we will need to address.



The public unveiling of the Bondi Memorial. Read more on page 52. Photo: Deep Field Photography

SAFETY & SOCIAL INCLUSION

We're here to help LGBTQ+ 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.

INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL HATE CRIMES IN NSW

In April 2022, the NSW Government announced that it will establish a Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ Hate Crimes. The inquiry will look into all unsolved suspected LGBTIQ hate crime deaths between 1970 and 2010, where the death was the subject of a previous investigation by NSW Police.

The establishment of the inquiry was among five recommendations from the final report in the NSW Parliament Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Social Issues Inquiry into Gay and Transgender Hate Crimes Between 1970 and 2010. ACON participated at every step of this inquiry, which began in 2018 and was conducted over two parliaments. We provided submissions, gave evidence and supported community members in making their own submissions.

ACON acknowledges the many people and organisations who have worked tirelessly over many years in bringing attention to past fatal violence and facilitating justice to those impacted by these crimes. We particularly acknowledge the efforts of Nicholas Stewart, Partner of Dowson Turco Lawyers, who worked tirelessly in advocating for this inquiry.

We also pay tribute to all who continue to persevere in their pursuit for truth and justice, including the many parliamentarians, journalists, academics, activists, legal professionals, community advocates, LGBTQ community members and allies.

ACON will continue to advocate for justice for victims and loved ones, and work with partners and stakeholders to achieve systemic improvements to facilitate better responses to hate crimes.

BONDI BADLANDS PODCAST

As part of continuing efforts to raise awareness of historical hate crimes, we partnered with journalist Greg Callaghan on a multi-episode podcast exploring Sydney's history of homophobic violence. *Bondi Badlands* is a five-part series that investigates the high-profile murders and disappearances of gay men that happened on the Bondi coast late 1980s and early 1990s. The podcast, supported by Waverley Council and published by *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*, drew strong engagement, averaging over 50,000 listens per episode.

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES NETWORK

As part of our work in empowering LGBTQ+ communities in Greater Western Sydney, ACON supported five Inclusive Communities Networks to deliver their safety and inclusion activities for 2021-22. The networks, comprising LGBTQ+ community members, leaders and groups, focus on LGBTQ+ inclusion, safety, culturally competent services provision, knowledge-sharing and collaboration. The networks are Fairfield-Liverpool LGBTIQ Inclusive Network; Inclusive Communities Network (Canterbury-Bankstown); Macarthur-Wingecarribee Diversity Network; Parramatta Queer Forum; and Western Sydney Rainbow Connection. Funded by

the NSW Ministry of Health through the South-East Sydney Local Health District.

LEADING RAINBOW WESTERN SYDNEY

In May, ACON launched Leading Rainbow Western Sydney, a forum for community leaders who support multicultural LGBTQ communities in Greater Western Sydney. The goal of the initiative is to bring together like-minded people and make cross-cultural connections as they support each other, build skills and foster ongoing community activity. The launch event at Bankstown Arts Centre included a panel discussion comprising several multicultural LGBTQ leaders who shared their experiences about living in Greater Western Sydney. This initiative has been made possible with by the NSW Ministry of Health through the South-East Sydney Local Health District.

IDAHOBT GRANTS

We marked International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBT) in May with a small grants program that supported community organisations hold IDAHOBT events in their local area. Eighteen applicants from across NSW shared in \$10,000 of funding. Three events targeted the engagement and involvement of LGBTQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, including an exhibition at Boomali Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, a First Nations Queer Stories, and the film screening of *Double Trouble* with a panel of community leaders.

WELCOME HERE PROJECT

We continued to provide support to many businesses, organisations and services across Australia in creating spaces that are more welcoming and inclusive of LGBTQ people through our Welcome Here Project. Over the past year, the project saw continued growth with 747 businesses accounting for 2,448 sites joining the project, bringing a total of 1,958 businesses and 3,603 sites. We thank the many businesses and services across Australia for proudly displaying Welcome Here stickers and committing to the first step of providing a welcoming space for people from LGBTQ communities.

RISE: THE BONDI MEMORIAL

The Bondi Memorial, a public artwork dedicated to victims and survivors of LGBTQ hate and violence, was finally unveiled this year. The public launch marked the culmination of a multi-year collaboration between ACON and Waverley Council.

Since 2016, ACON has been working with Waverley Council to construct a monument in Marks Park, Tamarama to honour the gay men and trans women that were assaulted or killed during a spate of violence in Sydney from the 1970s to the 1990s.

The artwork is entitled 'Rise' and has been designed by John Nicholson of United Art Projects (UAP). It features a six-level stone terrace that represents the six bands in the pride flag, and which invokes a staircase that rises above the history of violence. Embedded in the artwork is a series of plaques honouring lives lost and reflecting moments in the community's ongoing pursuit of healing, truth and justice.

Construction of the artwork commenced in August 2021 and was completed in October that year. The artwork was officially launched in June 2022. Hundreds gathered at the event to herald the artwork's completion and pay tribute to the courage, strength and resilience of survivors and loved ones.

Rise: The Bondi Memorial was made possible with a \$100,000 contribution from Waverley Council, donations from LGBTQ people and supporters via ACON's community fundraising drive, and a philanthropic gift of \$64,000 from LGBTQ community members Stephen Heasley and Andrew Borg. We express our sincerest thanks to all who made a financial contribution towards the memorial.

We commend Waverley Council for their long-standing support for this project. In particular, we acknowledge Mayor Paula Masselos, Curator and Visual Arts Coordinator Elizabeth Reidy and the broader Waverley Council team for their unwavering commitment towards the memorial and support for our communities.

ACON CEO Nicolas Parkhill said: "This memorial will serve as a monument to the victims and survivors and help heal the trauma these events have caused for their families and loved ones, as well as broader LGBTQ communities and many local residents. We hope that it will also help raise greater community awareness of the issue of LGBTQ hate crimes, promote the continuing need to pursue truth and justice, and serve as a reminder of the importance of valuing and celebrating diversity in our community".



Rise: The Bondi Memorial at Marks Park in Tamarama. Photo: John McRae



Photo: Robert Knapman

AGEING

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 PROJECT

Living Older Visibly and Engaged, or the LOVE Project, is ACON's ageing initiative. The project commenced in 2014 and is primarily focused on engaging older LGBTQ+ people in community events and activities, supporting healthy active living and developing health information specific to older LGBTQ+ people's needs. Underpinning much of the project's activities is reducing social isolation for older sexuality and gender diverse community members.

AFTERNOON DELIGHT

Afternoon Delight is a movie matinee and afternoon tea for older LGBTQ+ people, their friends, family and supporters. It provides a welcoming and safe environment for older LGBTQ+ people to come together for an afternoon of queer-themed films, entertainment, refreshments and social connection. This unique event focuses on reducing social isolation, strengthening community networking and giving participants access to LGBTQ+ specific healthy ageing information. This year's Afternoon Delight was held at Event Cinemas in April. It was presented in partnership with Queer Screen and supported by City of Sydney and NSW Department of Communities and Justice.

HEARING THE VOICES OF THE OLDER TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE COMMUNITY

ACON's LOVE Project and Trans Health Equity team, in partnership with Trans Pride Australia, invited the community to join an afternoon of storytelling and exploring the experiences of older trans and gender

diverse people. The event focused on the experiences of trans people aged 55+ years old but was open to all trans people, partners, friends, and allies. Some of the issues community members unpacked included social isolation, connection to community, ageing well in aged care, legal rights, mental health, building supportive networks, and how people can be better trans allies. The event was supported by City of Sydney.

SUPPORT FOR LGBTQ+ PEOPLE WITH PALLIATIVE CARE

In partnership with Carers NSW, Palliative Care NSW, Positive Life NSW, and the Seniors Rights Service, ACON co-designed, developed, and launched *Taking Control*, a toolkit to support LGBTQ+ people plan end-of-life decisions including palliative care. The toolkit was informed by a community needs assessment undertaken in 2020-2021 and was co-designed with the community advisory group and steering committee, to whom we are grateful for their contribution, ideas and lived expertise. This initiative was supported by the NSW Ministry of Health.

TEA AND TECHNOLOGY: DIGITAL LITERACY

In May, we hosted an event to support older LGBTQ+ people improve their digital technology skills. 'Technology and Tea', held at Glebe Town Hall, offered attendees the opportunity to learn about smart devices, getting online, browsing the web, staying safe, sharing information, personal security, apps and much more. The event provided a safe and welcoming space to answer questions about digital technology. 'Technology and Tea' was presented in partnership with Your Link and supported by City of Sydney.

LOVE CLUB GATHERING

The LOVE Club Gathering commenced in 2019 in response to older LGBTQ+ community members wanting more safe spaces to socialise, more opportunities to stay connected and greater access to current health information and inclusive service providers. Held at ACON once a month, the gathering has grown to become a fun and welcoming activity for older LGBTQ+ people to build their own support networks and friendships. During the NSW lockdowns, gatherings were held online, providing participants a way to continue connecting with each other in a safe manner.

COMMUNITY VISITORS SCHEME

Launched in 2015, our Community Visitors Scheme (CVS), funded by the Australian Government, provides much-needed social support to LGBTQ+ seniors experiencing loneliness or isolation. Trained volunteers make weekly or fortnightly one-on-one visits to older LGBTQ+ people for social interaction and support 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. The program was heavily impacted during the COVID lockdowns in 2021-22 with volunteer visitors unable to visit their matched recipients due to public health restrictions. Nevertheless, 28 volunteers continued to provide social support during this time through phone and video calls, window visits and letter writing, totalling 366 occasions of service to 29 people in aged care homes for the year. This equates to approximately 550 hours of volunteer visitor time. Furthermore, 31 people living independently in their own homes were supported by 34 volunteers. These CVS recipients received a total of 442 occasions of service equating to around 660 hours of volunteer visitor time.



Illustration by Briar Rolfe

TRANS HEALTH EQUITY

We are here to help trans and gender diverse people take control of their health.

ACON'S TRANS HEALTH EQUITY PROJECT

ACON's Trans Health Equity unit was established in 2019 to develop projects and initiatives that support the health and wellbeing of trans and gender diverse people. Our work in trans and gender diverse health is led by the priority action areas outlined in the *Blueprint for Improving the Health and Wellbeing of the Trans and Gender Diverse Community in NSW*. It has been a difficult year for trans and gender diverse people everywhere, but we remain committed to strengthening and empowering our communities by providing care, support and advocacy.

TRANSHUB

The *TransHub* website continues to be the flagship project for the Trans Health Equity team, amassing 898,000 visits and 1.4 million page views in the

2021-2022 financial year. In this time, the team have published a range of new content on the platform, including the *Trans Vitality Toolkit*, updated COVID-19 information for trans communities, a new information page and a report on NSW's trans history.

TRANS VITALITY

From 2020 to 2022, we delivered Trans Vitality, a capacity and resilience building suicide prevention program developed and delivered by peers, including:

- Our streams of online peer education workshops to 50 members of the community. Community members who participated reported improvements across all aspects covered by the program
- Online peer facilitation training (train-the-trainer) to 12 community members including ACON staff,
- A trans-affirming practice eLearning module
- A trans inclusive suicide responder eLearning, and
- An online toolkit hosted on *TransHub* with 3,000+ visits so far.

Trans Vitality is funded by the NSW Ministry of Health.

P4T: TRANS PEER NAVIGATION SERVICE

This year, ACON piloted a program providing peer support and service referrals to trans and gender diverse people in NSW. The program – P4T – is staffed by six trans people of a range of identities and experiences, and one peer coordinator. P4T emphasises a non-clinical

approaches and bridges advocacy, referral and informal support between the person seeking support and the peer navigator. From January to June 2022, P4T received 122 applications from community members and our peer navigators completed 130 appointments. Our P4T peer navigators supported community members with issues they identified as important to them, including exploring identity and trans experiences, medical and social affirmation, mental health and wellbeing concerns, relationship challenges and housing, as well as supporting clients with access to various other services through referrals and regular check-ins.

NSW TRANS HISTORY REPORT

The *NSW Trans History Report*, launched in early 2022, covers the history of trans people, identity, language, and politics in the land area known as NSW since before colonisation up until the present. Researched and written by Professor Noah Riseman of the Australian Catholic University, and with illustrations and design by Oliver Vincent and Jaime-lee Collinson, the report covers a range of periods in NSW's trans history, including early activism and medical struggles, the changing political landscape and legal victories, and how those narratives feed into present struggles, services and programs. The report features the voices and stories of many trans and gender diverse people, including a foreword by Norrie May Welby.

YARN IT UP

We worked in collaboration with BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation to run a series of Yarn It Up. Yarn it Up enabled Sistersgirls, Brotherboys, and Aboriginal trans people across Australia to connect and come together for a series of four themed virtual yarning circles. These yarning circles focused on storytelling, strengthening kinship, cultural and spiritual connections, and supporting a resilient community. Yarn It Up has been funded by The Aurora Group.

POLICY AND ADVOCACY

2021-2022 has been a challenging year for trans and gender diverse communities. Media coverage and commentary on trans issues heightened anxieties and distress for many trans and gender diverse people. The attacks on trans and gender diverse communities, particularly in the lead up to the federal election, had a massive impact on the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ people across Australia. Yet we were there for trans people of all genders throughout this period – writing submissions, appearing before committee inquiry hearings, meeting with stakeholders and partners, empowering community to reach out for support, and reminding all on self-care and how to care for each other.

LGBTQ+ PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY



ACON'S LGBTQ+ People With Disability project is here to support, build capacity and advocate for sexuality and gender diverse people with disabilities across Australia.

Established in 2020, ACON's LGBTQ+ People With Disability Project aims to provide support, advocacy, skills-building and visibility to sexuality and gender diverse people with disabilities across Australia. Among its key priorities was to develop the *QueerAbility Toolkit*, an online resource enabling LGBTQ+ people with disability to understand the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The toolkit was launched in December 2020.

Over the 2021-2022 financial year, the project co-designed, developed, and delivered three community workshops across NSW introducing LGBTQ+ disabled people to the *QueerAbility Toolkit*. We also developed and delivered a train-the-trainer package to partner AIDS councils and LGBTQ+ health organisations in every state and territory.

In addition, we continued to develop productive relationships through the convening of a national LGBTQ+ disability interagency and we supported LGBTQ+ people with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds give evidence at the Disability Royal Commission.

ACON will continue to support LGBTQ+ people with disability through this project.



ACON is here for regional NSW.
Photo: Reg Domingo

REGIONAL SERVICES

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 programs and services, and supporting a variety of local community groups. We have offices in the Northern Rivers and the Hunter regions, along with outreach services operating across Western and Southern NSW.

Our regional teams engage with community members in delivering health promotion campaigns, undertaking community development and peer education initiatives, supporting community groups and events, providing support to mainstream services, and providing access to needle and syringe programs. Our regional teams also provide counselling, care coordination and peer support.

ACON NORTHERN RIVERS

ACON Northern Rivers is based in Lismore and works with sexuality and gender diverse communities, people living with HIV, and our partners and services throughout the Northern NSW and the Mid North Coast – from Tweed Heads in the North to Port Macquarie in the south and out to Drake in the west.

Sadly, our Lismore office was inundated by the devastating floods in February 2022, and several of our staff members also lost their homes, as did so many within the Northern Rivers community. The impact of these floods was significant and continues to cause psychological distress and social and economic hardship among ACON's communities in the region.

Despite these challenges, ACON and the communities we serve are strong and resilient and when tragedy occurs, we pull together and rise above. In direct response to the floods, ACON Northern Rivers:

- Had our amazing counsellors and support staff on the ground at the evacuation centre within 24 hours of the floods to provide crisis care and practical support to the community, despite many of our staff having lost their own homes.
- Relocated our Lismore team several times to operate from the evacuation centre at Southern Cross University to ensure the community could still access our support services.
- Created a temporary online Flood Crisis Support Service that was staffed by ACON mental health clinicians based in Sydney and Newcastle, and provided free psychological support and care coordination.
- Commenced a flood-support appeal and raised over \$25,000, which was distributed to over 61 people from ACON's communities who were impacted by the floods and required financial assistance with essential items such as food, fuel, and clothing.
- With the support of our ACON family in Sydney and Newcastle, we were able to recommission our Conway Street office in Lismore to a workable standard within 5 months of the floods, and we opened our doors to the public again on June 27.

Despite the impact of the floods, our Lismore office was still able to deliver on many of our regular commitments, and among the highlights this year were:

- Delivered ACON's HIV prevention campaign and sexual health messages at local events throughout the Northern Rivers and Mid-North Coast. We promoted ACON's HIV awareness campaigns at community events including Queerstories, Flashback Fridays and Tropical Fruits' events. We also promoted the at-home HIV testing service, you[TEST], through our regional Northern Rivers newsletters and social media.
- Distributed 7,725 free condoms.
- Conducted 17 outreach trips to towns and cities across the Northern Rivers, facilitating social connection, networking, capacity building, and health and wellbeing opportunities.
- Attended 13 events to engage in health promotion and help create inclusive spaces for the LGBTQ+ community and promote HIV awareness. These included events at local support groups for gay, bi+ and men who have sex with men living with HIV, University Student Associations, and Neighbourhood centres.
- Provided harm reduction services via ACON's Rovers Program to patrons at the Glitter Ball and Tropical Fruits NYE Party, including distributing 193 health promotion packs.
- Continued to partner with local community organisations and support groups for people living with HIV, including Northern Rivers Gay Men, Lismore Lads and Brunswick Lunch Club.
- Supported domestic violence prevention initiatives through our membership in the Kyogle Anti Violence Alliance.
- Delivered counselling, care coordination and client services to community members in the Northern Rivers region via our two full-time social workers.
- Distributed 5,168 sterile needles and syringes and provided 61 brief interventions via our Needle Syringe Program outlet.

ACON HUNTER

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

- Delivered ACON's HIV prevention and sexual health campaigns, including the *Test Now – It's Your Ticket* to *Ride* HIV awareness campaign on our online platforms and through local networks.
- Engaged communities in regional NSW on ACON's LGBTQ+ health campaigns and resources, including the Red Ribbon Appeal for World AIDS Day, a healthy relationships/intimate partner and sexual violence campaign, *Trans Vitality*, and *It's Time to Think Positive About HIV*.
- Partnered with Hunter New England Sexual Health to offer a twice-weekly drop-in sexual health service that provided HIV and STI testing and treatment to over 250 clients.
- Distributed 24,817 free condoms.
- Partnered with the City of Newcastle in the development of their 10-year social strategy to ensure LGBTQ+ inclusion, community participation, wellbeing, access to services, and safety in the Newcastle local government area.
- Attended 22 events to engage in health promotion and help create inclusive spaces for the LGBTQ+ community and promote HIV awareness. These included the SHAG week with the University of Newcastle, Tamworth Country Music Festival, Mardi Gras viewing parties, Queer social events, service provider expos, and community catch-ups in Armidale.
- Partnered with Breast Screen Australia and Hunter New England Health District to provide an inclusive chest/breast screening day for trans and gender diverse people.
- Partnered with Awabakal, the City of Newcastle, and Trans Queer Brains Trust to produce the inaugural "Life in Colour" LGBTQ+ art prize and exhibition, including a launch event attended by 200 people, that combated social and economic exclusion.
- Implemented an Aboriginal-identified community health promotion internship program to improve employment outcomes for young Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTQ+ people; and providing the first intern-led culturally safe Queer Mob picnic in Newcastle.
- Continued to deliver both peer education and training to local service providers working with our communities. In total, we delivered 33 education



- sessions to 511 participants from a broad section of our regional communities. Our Community Health Promotion Officers also provided an additional 3,283 occasions of health education to our LGBTQ+ peers.
- Conducted 22 outreach trips to towns and cities across our region, facilitating social connection, networking, capacity building, and health and wellbeing opportunities that were attended by 2,035 people.
 - Provided over 1,830 hours of counselling, care coordination, and peer support to over 300 clients directly from the ACON Hunter Client Services Team and achieving a 96% average client satisfaction rating.
 - Expanded the peer-led Needle and Syringe Outreach Service and delivering 63,195 needles and syringes and other sterile injecting equipment to people in regional areas with limited or no access to existing NSP outlets. Distributing a further 179,557 needles and syringes and providing 1,302 brief interventions at our Maitland Road NSP outlet.

ACON REGIONAL OUTREACH

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

- Delivered ACONs HIV prevention campaigns and sexual health messages, including *Ticket to Ride*, and *It's Time to Think Positive About HIV*, at local events in Wollongong, Leeton, Albury, Wagga Wagga, Hay, Katoomba, Penrith, Bega and Nowra.
- Hosted six virtual regional forums and workshops focusing on sexual health and wellbeing.

- Delivered 4,125 safe sex packs to community events, organisations and venues in the Southern, Murrumbidgee and Far West regions of NSW.
- Delivered World AIDS Day events in Katoomba and Wollongong
- Delivered ACON resources to 98 services and organisations in the Southern, Murrumbidgee and Far West regions.
- Partnered with local GPs, and Primary Health Networks to develop ACON PrEP guides for Wagga Wagga and the South Coast, to improve access to PrEP in regional NSW.
- Developed a series of three HIV prevention podcasts focusing on the issues and needs specific to people living in regional NSW.
- Supported and attended key events marking LGBTQ+ days of significance in Leeton, Hay, Katoomba and Penrith
- Strengthened partnerships to improve the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ people and people living with HIV. Including Illawarra Rainbow Community, Leeton Pride, Wagga Mardi Gras, Rainbow on the Plains, Rainbow Wave Bega, Sexual Health Centres, Aboriginal Medical Services, Charles Sturt University, Primary Health Networks, Local Health Districts, youth services, local councils, women's centres, community hubs, pubs and clubs.
- Attended or ran over 20 events and initiatives to engage in health promotion and help create inclusive spaces for the LGBTQ+ community and promote HIV awareness. These included Wagga Mardi Gras, Queerstories in Wollongong for Pride Month, World AIDS Day Red Party Wollongong, two online Rainbow Regional Social workshops, Pride in Diversity Regional conference – Albury, the ACON Regional Community Survey snapshot launch, Medlow Bath AIDS garden rejuvenation, Queerscreen CSU event Riverina Playhouse, FRESH Festival Wagga Wagga.



Celebrating at the Australian LGBTQ Inclusion Awards.
Photo: Mark Bond

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.

PRIDE INCLUSION PROGRAMS

ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs offers Australian employers, sporting organisations and health and wellbeing providers a membership-based program that provides dedicated relationship management, expert advice, training, resources and on call support for all aspects of LGBTQ inclusion. In addition, members are provided with strategic roadmaps for best practice, benchmarking opportunities and participation in annual employee surveys all of which provide valuable information on the scope, trajectory, and impact of their work. Pride Inclusion Programs also holds an annual conference, several awards events, information sessions, data presentations, and panel events throughout the year.

PRIDE IN DIVERSITY

Membership within Pride in Diversity has continued to grow this year with member numbers sitting at 410 by the end of June 2022. This year saw the resumption of face-to-face meetings and in-house training as well as successful regional and national events in Western Sydney, Albury and Darwin. The Train the Trainer program has continued to gain traction as has focus on strategic initiatives: Sapphire (LGBTQ women), International Reach, Trans Recruitment, CALD employees, Regional Reach, Bi+ Inclusion and Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander LGBTQ employees. The Australian LGBTQ Inclusion Awards this year, celebrating excellence in the Australian Workplace Equality Index and acknowledging individuals that have had a significant impact on their organisation's inclusion initiatives, sold out in three minutes with 964 people attending in person and 55 online. It was the most successful awards event to date.

PRIDE IN SPORT

Pride in Sport membership grew steadily throughout the year with 59 members at the end of June 2022. This year Pride in Sport worked closely with the Australian Institute of Sport to launch their Thrive with Pride LGBTQ Ambassador Program, a program that focuses on fostering safe and inclusive environments for athletes to thrive in sport. Pride in Sport was also successful in working with Touch Football Australia to secure a grant from Sport Australia which focuses on encouraging LGBTQ+ participation in sport through inclusion work across 12 national sporting organisations. This work includes but is not limited to the creation of inclusion policies, the delivery of training and the provision of year-long consultation and support.

PRIDE IN HEALTH + WELLBEING

Pride in Health + Wellbeing enjoyed substantial growth this year closing the financial year with 63 members and two new staff. Western Australia and South Australia welcomed members for the first time. This year also saw the inaugural Pride in Health + Wellbeing Awards. The virtual event celebrated the achievements of organisations participating in the Health and Wellbeing Equality Index (HWEI) in addition to individual awards for Innovation, LGBTQ Ally and Out Role Model. Featured guests at the event included Victorian LGBTIQ Commissioner Todd Fernando ACON Board Member Dr Atari Metcalf and National Mental Health Commission Chair Lucinda Brogden in addition to Pride in Health + Wellbeing Patrons Michael Ebeid and Dr Kerryn Phelps.

Pride in Health & Wellbeing also successfully launched its inaugural Ally program that featured a publication, merchandise and information on how to support LGBTQ inclusive service users. In addition, the program also



commenced work with several Primary Health Networks, focusing on making LGBTQ inclusive care more accessible within commissioned services.

NATIONAL BENCHMARKING INDICES & SURVEYS

All Pride Inclusion Programs publish a roadmap for best practice within their respective areas of expertise. This roadmap forms the basis of our national benchmarking instrument, each accompanied by a comprehensive survey. The combination of benchmarking tools and surveys allows organisations to holistically measure their progress in LGBTQ inclusion, benchmark themselves against their peers and provide a comprehensive overview of progress to date.

This year the Australian Workplace Equality Index saw 166 submissions and 44,970 responses to the survey. The Pride in Sport index saw 44 responses and 1,783 survey responses. The Pride in Health and Wellbeing Index saw 22 submissions with a total of 1,429 survey responses.

PRIDE IN PRACTICE CONFERENCE

The Pride in Practice conference is the only national conference dedicated to advancing LGBTQ inclusion in workplaces, sporting organisations and the health and human services sector. Due to continuing COVID restrictions the conference in December 2021 was held online. It was outstanding event, drawing over 800 delegates to attend 50 sessions featuring approximately 150 speakers.

ACON'S PRIDE TRAINING

Pride Training is ACON's training and consultancy social enterprise assisting leaders, professionals, organisations and service providers on sexuality and gender diverse inclusion. In 2021-2022, Pride Training's eLearning programs saw 3,644 learners with LGBTQ Introduction recording 1109 enrolments. With facilitated learning, we delivered 69 training sessions – both in-person and online – to 1,444 individual learners. Throughout the year, Pride Training also delivered customised eLearning packages to professional organisations, peak bodies, health service providers and not-for-profit organisations. In the coming year, Pride Training will continue to offer its training programs, including modules on dealing with sexual assault in LGBTQ communities and provide trans-affirming practice.



ACON's fundraising activation at Vivid Sydney.
Photo: Deep Field Photography

FOCUS AREA 4

OUR WORK IS FOCUSED ON

Developing financial diversity, strength and growth

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

IN THIS SECTION

- Finance Operations
- Fundraising & Philanthropy

FINANCE OPERATIONS

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.

ACON is committed to further developing financial diversity, strength and growth. The focus of financial decision making is long term sustainability. During this financial year, revenue from community fundraising and events continued to be impacted by the pandemic environment. However, income through other revenue streams, such as our Pride Inclusion Programs, was robust. ACON also had considerable success in its various government grant applications at national, state and local levels.

The Finance Team continued to deliver accurate financial reporting, including thorough monitoring of income and expenditure, as well as closely analysing the cashflow of the organisation. Due to the pandemic and the economic environment, quarterly reviews of performance against budget continued to ensure that the Finance & Audit Committee and Board of Directors had full transparency of how ACON's operations were tracking throughout the year.

ACON re-invests income that is self-generated through fee-for-service offerings such as Pride Inclusion Programs, Pride Training and Pride Counselling to ensure continued growth of these programs. These programs operate independently from government funding and the income generated allows ACON to continue to expand the reach of its various programs and services to our communities.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND COMPLIANCE

ACON continues to mature its risk management and compliance frameworks.

The risk management framework is informed by the principles and guidelines set out in the Australian Risk Management Standard (AS/NZS ISO 31000:2018). The framework comprises policies, procedures, guidelines and operational tools to support decision-making for the management of risks. Each business unit maintains a risk register and these registers feed into the organisational-wide risk register, as and when required.

ACON maintains a Compliance Framework, which also comprises policies, procedures and guidelines. A breach register is maintained to ensure that any breaches of legislation or policies are documented and resolved. Senior managers have been given access to a legislative alert system to ensure they remain up-to-date with all current legislation relevant to their business unit.

Risk management and compliance reports are provided to the Finance and Audit Committee and the Board on a quarterly basis.

FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

ACON has a Finance & Audit Committee (Committee), which is responsible, on behalf of the organisation, for ensuring that ACON's organisational culture, capabilities, systems and processes are appropriate to protect the financial health and the reputation of ACON in all audit-related areas.

The Committee reviews the financial reporting processes, the systems and internal controls, risk management, compliance and audit processes, as well as reviewing and analysing the quarterly financial and investment reports.

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 in a timely manner when deficiencies are identified.

The Committee plays a significant role in advising the Board of Directors in relation to the investment portfolio and its performance. It ensures that ACON's resources are properly utilised to maintain returns, while managing portfolio risks, within parameters approved by the Board.

IMPROVED SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

We continued to develop and implement improved systems, processes and initiatives to strengthen our finance operational capabilities. These include:

- Regular review and update of finance policies in view of changes in complexity and implementation of new systems, and changes in accounting standards and regulations;
- Performance of additional internal audits to improve operational efficiency and ensure decisions are properly authorised;
- Updating guidelines for the internal invoice system to ensure users and managers understand the invoice management process;
- Updating supplier ABN to be more inclusive to trans suppliers;
- Tightening security of online payments to avoid fraudulent transactions;
- Switching to digital Cabcharge passes to prevent fraud and to more accurately monitor costs and codings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 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, as well as Workplace, Health and Safety. With the pandemic and health orders around mandatory vaccinations, the pro bono advice provided was instrumental in assisting ACON navigate appropriate policies and procedures.

We gratefully acknowledge the pro bono support provided during 2021-22 by the following legal advisers:

- Allens
- Baker McKenzie
- KL Gates
- Norton Rose Fulbright
- Dowson Turco Lawyers

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



Raising funds for ACON's Red Ribbon Appeal.
Photo: Deep Field Photography



ACON's long-running community fundraiser Bingay at The Beresford. Photo: Deep Field Photography

FUNDRAISING & PHILANTHROPY

We're here to deliver bold, innovative and sustainable fundraising initiatives and activities that appeal to our communities to help continue funding our work.

ADAPTING TO A CHALLENGING FUNDRAISING ENVIRONMENT

Fundraising is essential for delivering our programs and services and improve the health and wellbeing of our communities. We simply would not have the impact or reach that we do without the many passionate people who donate and raise funds for us every year. Their ongoing support helps to propel us forward, particularly in a challenging fundraising landscape.

As the pandemic persisted into the new year, COVID continued to impact many of our fundraising activities. Once again, we were forced to cancel our annual fundraising gala, the Honour Awards. Capacity for our monthly fundraiser Bingay was also impacted and participation with our Red Ribbon Appeal was significantly down because of the pandemic. But we continued to engage our supporters in other fundraising activities throughout the year such as our digital appeals and community initiatives.

THE RED RIBBON APPEAL

For the second year, disruptions brought on by the COVID pandemic continued to impact the planning and delivery of the Red Ribbon Appeal in 2021. Fundraising activities we had hoped would return did not happen and those that did were drastically wound back in size and scope. But this was not unexpected. During our preparations for the 2021 Red Ribbon Appeal, we made plans and contingencies for the campaign to be implemented in a heavily restricted COVID-safe environment. As such, we increased our focus in peer-to-peer fundraising, virtual initiatives and email marketing.

While fundraising events were down compared to pre-pandemic levels, we were able to conduct some in-person fundraising activities, albeit in a limited way, including the Street Appeal, Theatre Collections, community hubs and at local LGBTQ venues in Sydney and across NSW.

We extend our sincerest thanks and appreciation to all who supported our Red Ribbon Appeal this year. We offer our deepest gratitude to all who participated, hosted a fundraiser, purchased merchandise or made a donation.

BINGAY

First held in 1999, Bingay is ACON's long-running community fundraiser. It is held regularly at The Beresford Hotel in Surry Hills, as well as at special events and private functions. This year, Bingay was forced to cancel several events due to the pandemic. However, it continued to attract strong attendance and engagement when it was on. We thank our communities and supporters for their continued support for Bingay.

VIVID SYDNEY

ACON is grateful to have been able to fundraise at Vivid Sydney in May and June. At a dedicated stall in Circular Quay over 23 nights, we engaged the public and raised funds for ACON by selling light up merchandise and souvenirs. We thank everyone who supported our Vivid Sydney fundraiser.

LEGACY GIFTS & BEQUESTS

This year, we continued our work in revitalising ACON's Bequest Program. Following the release of a refreshed information kit in June 2021, we partnered with online Will writing platform Safewill. In October, we launched a pilot email campaign with Safewill, to increase awareness of ACON's gift-in-wills programs and generate donations via Safewill's platform. We express our respect and gratitude to those who have left a gift in their will to ACON. Their legacy gifts help us continue our work in supporting the health and wellbeing of sexuality and gender diverse people and people with HIV.

FUNDRAISING PARTNERSHIPS

We appreciate the valuable support of many businesses and organisations during the year. ACON is grateful to be the beneficiary of a range of fundraising events and philanthropic donations in 2021-2022 by brands, corporations and small businesses including Merivale, Pernod Ricard Australia, PUIG, LendLease, Dowson Turco Lawyers, Meta, Fitness First and Stonewall Hotel.

LOOKING AHEAD

The charity fundraising sector is ever-changing. The advent of COVID has made the not-for-profit fundraising landscape even more challenging. In order to meet these challenges, we must adapt. ACON will continue to develop innovative campaigns and invest in new technologies to give our communities more options to support us. Through improved systems and process, we aim to improve the supporter experience and enhance engagement with our fundraising programs.

THANK YOU!

We extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to all our supporters who continue to support our work through fundraising and philanthropy. We are truly humbled by the generosity of people in our communities and our allies. We thank all of our donors and partners for your kind assistance, as well as all those who supported us through community events, appeals, fundraising drives and in-kind contributions.

OUR WORK IS FOCUSED ON

Building a workplace that attracts and develops the best people

- We create opportunities for staff and volunteers to develop their skills, ensuring a passionate, authentic and committed team.
- We provide a positive working environment in which staff and volunteers feel supported and justly recognised for the work they do.
- We are committed to creating an effective, efficient and healthy workplace, which will best serve our clients and communities.
- 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.
- We foster an environment of respect in which staff and volunteers feel supported to provide and receive feedback on their work.

IN THIS SECTION

- Organisational Development
- Reconciliation Action Plan
- Community Engagement

FOCUS AREA 5



ACON at the Sydney Mardi Gras Parade 2022.
Photo: Steve Christo



ACON at the Sydney Mardi Gras Parade 2022.
Photo: Ann-Marie Callihanna

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

ACON's Corporate Services division performs pivotal operational functions that are key to the organisation's effectiveness and success, including human resources, finance and payroll, information management and technology, and facilities management.

In 2021-22, we continued to enhance our organisational capacity and operations by driving efficiency improvements, establishing new systems, streamlining processes, implementing new technology initiatives,

and strengthening organisational and financial governance. We also continued to adapt policies and procedures in line with COVID restrictions, as required.

This year's highlights include:

- Front of House provided a total of 14,941 occasions of service, both face-to-face and via telephone, even though we had significant periods of lockdowns.
- Facilities Management maintained all Work, Health and Safety compliance obligations with two minor

employee incidents receiving immediate attention and support. The review and auditing of our WHS Management System continues with the view of incorporating leading practices and making our workplace as safe as possible. Additionally, the team continued the maintenance and efficient operation of facilities and ensured spaces adhered to changing physical distancing requirements under COVID Safe Work Plans, safeguarding the health and wellbeing of all in the building. In conjunction with the Corporate Services team and other business units, Facilities Management provided support to the Northern Rivers ACON office during their flood recovery work in 2022.

- HR supported the business with policy, practices and guidance to manage ongoing hybrid work arrangements ensuring that employees working away from the office stayed connected with their colleagues, their work, ACON and the communities they serve. Pleasingly, in our May 2022 Staff Survey, our employees rated their engagement with ACON at a record high of 91%, which despite the ongoing challenges of COVID, was an 8% increase compared to 2021 data.

- Information Technology continued to respond efficiently to the changing environment and facilitate remote working during COVID. Throughout the year, digitisation of business processes through cloud technologies continued. Business continuity and cybersecurity has also been a focus of IT's attention and updated procedures. The IT team were also instrumental in ensuring that Lismore office personnel were able to operate whilst the offices were unable to be occupied, and then assisted in the recovery effort and bringing the office back to full functionality once the crisis was over.
- The Finance team provided timely and accurate reports throughout the period, particularly in relation to the impact of COVID on the organisation's financial position.

QUALITY ACCREDITATION

ACON maintained its Quality Accreditation and successfully completed its mid-term assessment during the 2021-22 financial year. The assessment was carried out by Quality Innovation Performance Ltd.

ACON has promptly completed actions on its Quality Accreditation Improvement Plan, continuing to provide leadership and advocacy on key issues relating to community health, inclusion and HIV responses for people of diverse sexualities and genders.

OUR COVID-19 RESPONSE

ACON continued to adapt quickly to the pandemic and changing public health orders, to ensure employees were supported in their work and that the organisation was able to continue to meet the needs of our communities. Among the actions we undertook this year were:

- Updating or implementing new policies to ensure compliance with Public Health Orders.
- Providing a COVID safe workplace for all staff, volunteers and visitors to ACON premises and services.
- Encouraging staff to get vaccinated against COVID.
- Providing free seasonal flu shots to support general health and wellbeing.
- Ensuring staff were aware of, and had access to, the Employee Assistance Program.

- Continuing to facilitate remote working for all staff with necessary equipment and technology and by providing online ergonomic assessments.
- Providing staff with regular updates on the pandemic, public health restrictions and other health information.
- Providing N95 masks to staff as required, as well as Rapid Antigen Tests if staff were exposed to COVID in the course of their employment.
- Continuing to keep our comprehensive Return to Office and Services Plan up to date and relevant to the ongoing changes in the community and any health challenges.

STAFF LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

ACON remains committed to providing high quality, appropriate and beneficial learning and development to its employees. In 2021-2022, we continued to offer our organisational-wide learning and development program. Among the highlights this year were:

- 65 employees participated in 690 hours of formal professional learning and development courses.
- Managers continued to coach their employees 'on the job' to excel at their roles and to build skills that enhance their careers within or beyond ACON.
- Access to generous education leave provisions were supported by managers for their employees studying undergraduate or postgraduate degrees.
- Information technology training was provided where needed, including tailored Microsoft training to support productivity and effectiveness at work.
- To support a safe, discrimination-free and legally compliant workplace, all employees have completed our mandatory 'Law at Work' e-learning modules, which address issues such as sexual harassment in the workplace, anti-discrimination and equal opportunity, social media usage, work health and safety, and bullying.
- We held our annual staff development conference virtually. Across four weeks, staff participated online to explore ACON's achievements in community health, HIV responses, and inclusion, as well as to learn about best practice in service delivery and community engagement.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT

Results from our annual staff engagement survey conducted by the Voice Project resulted in high engagement, participation and satisfaction rates among ACON employees.

Highlights of this year's survey include:

- A response rate of 95% (compared to 96% in 2021). This is an excellent participation rate that is well above the industry average (77%) and means that the organisation-wide results for ACON are highly reliable (accurate within plus or minus 1.7%).
- An overall engagement score of 91%, an increase of 8% from last year, and is significantly higher than both the H&CS and NFP benchmarks (+9% and +10% respectively).
- Progress was 89% favourable. Compared to last year, ACON's progress results were 2% higher than the previous survey. Progress reflects staff perceptions about organisational performance. It is well above the H&CS and NFP benchmarks (+14% and +17% respectively). More specifically, staff have highly positive perceptions of client satisfaction and the quality of the services provided by ACON (97%). They also believe ACON is successful in achieving its objectives.
- Compared to the last survey in 2021, there has been one standout improvement, which is around staff consultation and involvement in decision-making (+13%). More staff feel that they are consulted before decisions that affect them are made. Another practice that has seen a significant improvement is leadership (+8%).

MULTICULTURAL ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Last year, ACON launched its first-ever Multicultural Engagement Plan (MEP) to guide the organisation in how we engage with and empower LGBTQ+ people from culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse migrant and refugee backgrounds, and people of colour. 2021-2022 saw the first full year the MEP has been in operation.

The MEP led to organisational initiatives, which included hiring a full-time Multicultural Engagement and Community Development Officer, increasing staff members' racial and antiracism literacy through Diversity Council Australia's 'Racism At Work' forum, and changes to our community grants selection processes. This included ensuring our selection panels reflect the cultural diversity of our communities, prioritising funding for groups who support LGBTQ+ people from culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse migrant and refugee backgrounds, and people of colour, and tailoring our community partnership agreements wherever possible to ensure they are mutually beneficial.

The MEP also supported ACON in leading a number of programs and services throughout the year. This included developing 'Rainbow Cultures' (an online directory of multicultural LGBTQ groups and services in NSW), running 'Leading Rainbow Western Sydney' (a multicultural LGBTQ leadership gathering hosted in Bankstown), and coordinating ACON's Multicultural Food Hamper program. ACON also supported the West Ball by setting up pop-up HIV testing at their event and developing an *Ending HIV* campaign targeting queer and trans people of colour in Western Sydney.

ACON has also supported antiracist advocacy by supporting the Australian Human Rights Commission in their consultations for their National Antiracism Framework and new iteration of the *Racism. It Stops With Me* campaign. ACON also released its own video message to the community on International Day for the Elimination of Racism.

WOMEN'S HEALTH, SAFETY & EQUITY TASKFORCE

The Women's Health, Safety & Equity Taskforce (WHSETF) was formed in the wake of a particularly difficult year for women in Parliament and in the media starting early 2021. This sparked ongoing conversations within ACON about what we could be doing both internally and externally for our communities to address gender equity. From these discussions the WHSETF was formed, and the first meeting was held on 30 September 2021.

The purpose and objectives of the WHSETF are to look for opportunities to promote gender equity within the organisation whilst communicating the whole of organisation value this will bring and better reflect the communities we serve; and to create ACON's first Workplace Gender Equality Strategy which will be used as a blueprint for accountability against measurable objectives.

Among the WHSETF's key achievements for the year include hosting an all-staff International Women's Day 2022 event and showcasing female voices on the ACON board and staff on social media in the lead up; the creation of an ACON's Women's Network; planning for the roll out of all-staff internal gender equity training; identifying grant opportunities for women and elevating the priority for application; and identifying women in leadership L&D opportunities for staff.

In the coming year, the WHSETF will work with the incoming Diversity & Inclusion Officer and using tools and frameworks designed by WGEA to plan, design and implement ACON's Workplace Gender Equality Strategy.

MEDIA, COMMUNICATIONS & DIGITAL INFORMATION

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

- We reached an estimated online audience of over 5.3 million in 2021-2022, 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 platforms continued to grow. Across our Facebook channels, our followers grew by 6%, as did our connection on Twitter. Our collective Instagram accounts recorded a 76% rise in followers compared to the previous year.
- We continued to deliver a range of external and internal e-newsletters to keep supporters and staff engaged with ACON's work and activities. Our external digital subscribers continued to grow across our mailing lists.
- There was significant engagement across ACON's suite of websites including *ACON Health*, *Ending HIV*, *Emen8*, *Pivot Point*, *Pride Inclusion Programs* and *Say It Out Loud*.

We continued to enhance ACON's digital information and engagement capabilities. Key highlights from ACON's Digital Information unit include:

- Processing over 500 internal digital requests throughout the year, including the consolidation of website maintenance across ACON projects.
- Working with stakeholders to improve user experiences and increase digital transformation across organisation, including volunteer onboarding, clinical support services and event management.
- Continuing to design, deliver and support ACON platforms that enable digital transformation.
- Supporting ACON projects to align with digital and ICT priorities, facilitating improvements in efficiency and productivity delivered through digital enabled initiatives across internal and external stakeholders.

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

This year, we continued the implementation of our second Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The ACON Innovate RAP 2020-2022 strengthens our commitment to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures, acknowledge our history, build closer relationships, and to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

ACON'S INNOVATE RAP

ACON's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2020 – 2022 has guided a strategic, collaborative and whole of organisation approach to our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for the past two years. This year, we conducted a review of our progress on the Innovate RAP. ACON's Innovate RAP comprises four pillars: relationships, respect, opportunities, and governance. The review found that ACON has demonstrated progress against all four pillars of our Innovate RAP. It also highlighted priorities for our future directions. These include:

- In alignment with actions outlined in the governance pillar of the Innovate RAP, ACON appointed an Aboriginal board member and will continue to focus on strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander client services, data recording and reporting processes.
- The percentage of ACON's staff who are Aboriginal increased from 1.5 per cent in 2019 to 4.1 per cent in 2022. ACON has identified that it is important to continue work to increase purchases from Aboriginal businesses and improve retention of Aboriginal staff.
- Between 2019 and 2022, many ACON staff attended cultural awareness training courses. However, learning and development opportunities for staff focussing on work with First Nations communities need to be extended.
- ACON achieved its goals around participation in days of cultural significance and will prioritise further work to develop relationships with the delivery of the First Nations Voices Project.

Following consultation with Reconciliation Australia, ACON's RAP Working Group has taken the decision to create another Innovate RAP commencing in 2023 to carry the organisation through to 2025. ACON's RAP Working Group has commenced work on the next Innovate RAP.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES PROJECT

Our RAP outlines clear actions and defines how ACON should work in partnership and collaborate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Central to the RAP is to prioritise the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led collaborative process for the development of strategic directions, programs and services across ACON. In addition, progressing a community listening process to better understand what matters to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of diverse genders and sexualities is also key priority. To deliver on these strategies, ACON is establishing a First Nations Voice Project.

Feedback from the RAP Working Group highlighted the importance of ACON endeavouring to strengthen and mend relationships with our First Nations communities via a process of honest listening and meaningful engagement. In response, ACON's senior leadership team committed and engaged in a listening process, which commenced in early 2022 and will continue throughout the coming year. An Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander consultant will be recruited to facilitate ACON's work on the First Nations Voices Project. In the coming year, members of ACON's senior leadership team will meet with Aboriginal elders and community leaders across NSW.

With the guidance of our RAP Working Group, ACON is commencing work on the First Nations Voices Project with the intention of documenting the process, being transparent about findings, reflecting on our practice and progress, and committing to listening and improving.

CULTURAL CAPACITY TRAINING

As part of ACON's commitment to the Innovate RAP, ACON staff and board members were provided the opportunity to attend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural capacity training. This training was co-designed with and delivered by BlaQ Aboriginal

Corporation. It addressed ways of working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, sistergirls, brotherboys, queer and non-binary community members. Feedback from the training was overwhelmingly positive with staff appreciating the training as a unique opportunity to learn about and celebrate queer First Nations communities.

RECONCILIATION WEEK 2022

For National Reconciliation Week in 2022, ACON staff were encouraged to participate in different forms of cultural immersion. Recognising that cultural learning comes from meaningful listening, staff were permitted to use their learning and development allowance to attend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events in their local area. The overall focus of ACON's approach to National Reconciliation Week was to emphasise being present, listening and getting to know people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Staff were surveyed about their engagement with National Reconciliation Week, and some attended Aboriginal cultural tours, training programs, museum tours and other community events such as barbecues and picnics. Staff reported the benefits of this approach to National Reconciliation Week, valuing the opportunity to spend time in community with a focus on establishing personal connections and building new relationships.



ACON'S VISION FOR RECONCILIATION

ACON's vision for reconciliation is an inclusive community where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community work together in the spirit of truth and in the pursuit of health equity.

It is a community that respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of diverse genders and sexualities' identities and cultures, listens to their voices, and ensures they are at the centre of health responses.

The future that we envisage is free from HIV transmissions and one where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of diverse genders and sexualities, alongside the rest of our communities, live their healthiest lives. No one should be left behind.



The First Nations Float at the Mardi Gras Parade.
Photo: Luke Currie-Richardson



ACON was proud to support the Bookshop Darlinghurst's Literary Dinner series. Photo: Deep Field Photography

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We're here to bring people together by providing opportunities for our staff, volunteers and people in our communities to get involved, connect, contribute and celebrate.

OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS

We have hundreds of volunteers across NSW who play a crucial role in helping us run programs and services that improve the health and wellbeing of our communities. ACON would simply not be able to do its work without our volunteers. Our volunteers provide support in many areas of the organisation including delivering safe sex education programs, packing safe sex packs, providing governance and guidance at the board level, assisting with care and support services, helping us run community events and raising much-needed funds. We are extremely grateful for the continued support of all our volunteers.

THE RED RIBBON APPEAL

The Red Ribbon Appeal, held in the lead up to, and on, World AIDS Day, provides ACON with a unique opportunity to engage the community on our work in HIV prevention and support. People and organisations that get involved with the appeal are provided with access to resources on preventing new HIV transmissions, tackling HIV stigma and support people living with HIV. This year, disruptions brought on by COVID impacted the number of events held in support of the appeal. However, those that took place, such as Stonewall Hotel's Red Party and The Beresford's Red Sunday event, drew good crowds.

BINGAY

Bingay is ACON's long-running community engagement and fundraising event held monthly at The Beresford in Surry Hills. Now in its 23rd year, it provides a space for community members and allies to come together while raising funds for ACON at the same time. Bingay was suspended in mid-2021 due to the COVID restrictions but returned to The Beresford in October once public health restrictions were eased. This year, a special Bingay High Tea was held The Langham, Sydney. We express our sincerest thanks to everyone who supported Bingay over the past year.

SYDNEY GAY AND LESBIAN MARDI GRAS

The annual Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival provides us with a unique opportunity to promote key health messages and engage with community members on HIV prevention, LGBTQ health, harm reduction and community safety. At this year's Fair Day, we focused on promoting our new Test Now campaign and connected thousands of people through our information stalls. Our entry in the Mardi Gras Parade, held at the Sydney

Cricket Ground, enabled us to further showcase amplify our HIV and STI message. Before the parade, ACON health promotion staff and volunteers distributed health resources and information to attendees.

QUEER SCREEN FILM FESTIVAL

Every year at Queer Screen's Mardi Gras Film Festival, ACON co-presents a range of films to promote our health and wellbeing messages and engage community members on important health issues. The annual festival provides us with an important opportunity to further amplify our work and raise awareness of programs and services to our communities. This year, ACON presented a series of films spanning a diverse range of health areas including Asian gay men's health, healthy ageing, HIV prevention, young gay men's health, women's health, and trans and gender diverse health. We also partnered with Queer Screen to present films at the Queer Screen Film Fest in September 2021, which was presented online and on-demand.

THE BOOKSHOP LITERARY DINNERS

We continued our partnership with The Bookshop Darlinghurst to present a series of LGBTQ literary events. The Bookshop's Literary Dinners sought to bring the community together to celebrate LGBTQ authors and discuss contemporary LGBTQ issues in a safe environment. Dinners were held at Soi 25 in Potts Point, Thai Nesia and Claire's Kitchen in Darlinghurst and Don't Tell Aunty in Surry Hills. Among the author dinners ACON co-presented were Dennis Altman, Christine Manfield, Geraldine Turner and Jason Om. We commend The Bookshop Darlinghurst for hosting these events.

SYDNEY CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL

Each year in May, ACON, in partnership with Positive Life NSW, produces the The Sydney AIDS Candlelight Memorial. Held at The Eternity Playhouse in Darlinghurst, it commemorates International AIDS Candlelight Memorial Day to remember those we have lost from an AIDS-related illness. Names are read out by community members during the service. This year's event was hosted by Julie Bates and the keynote speech was delivered by Basil Donovan.

EXECUTIVE

OUR SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM



Nicolas Parkhill AM

Chief Executive Officer

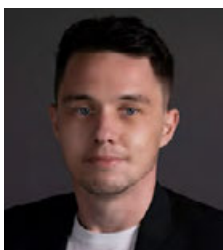
Nicolas Parkhill AM has over 30 years of experience in public and community health. Since 2009 Nicolas has been the CEO of ACON. Prior to this role Nicolas worked in a variety of senior management and policy roles for NSW Health and the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet. He has a background in health policy, social marketing campaign management and public relations. Nicolas is a former Board member of ACON, the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO) and APCOM, the peak body in the Asia Pacific region for men who have sex with men and transgender people in relation to HIV, sexual health and wellbeing, and human rights in relation to HIV, sexual health and human rights.

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.



Karen Price

Deputy CEO



Matthew Vaughan

Director, HIV & Sexual Health

Matthew is the 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.

Teddy Cook (he/him) has over 15 years' experience in community health and non-government sectors. Joining ACON in 2012, Teddy is currently Director, Community Health and Wellbeing where he oversees Clinical and Client Services, LGBTQ+ Community Health Programs and Pride Training. Teddy specialises in trans health and rights, community development, health promotion and program delivery. He led on the creation of TransHub. Teddy is also a researcher and Adjunct Lecturer at the Kirby Institute, UNSW and he joins ACON's Senior Leadership Team as a proud queer man of trans experience.



Teddy Cook

Director, Community Health & Wellbeing



Susan Culverston

Director, Corporate Services

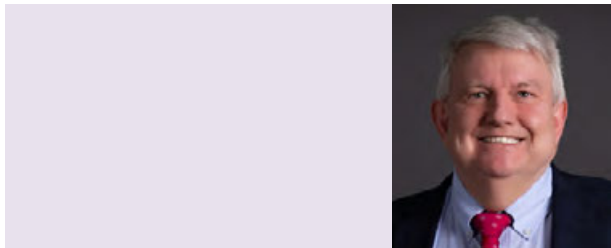
Susan has more than 20 years' experience in management, administration and leadership across a range of environments including the corporate sector, not-for-profit organisations and both Commonwealth and State public sectors. Susan has a Doctorate in Business Administration with the focus of her thesis 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.



Dawn-Emsen Hough

Director, Pride Inclusion Programs

Dawn 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. Dawn was appointed Adjunct Senior Fellow at University of Queensland 2021.



Mark Latchford

Associate Director, Pride in Diversity

Mark 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, and is a published author.



Sabine D'Haeseleer

Company Secretary and EA to CEO

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.

Brent Mackie

Director, Policy, Strategy & Research



During his more than 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.



Reg Domingo

Director, Marketing, Communications & Fundraising

Reg is ACON's 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 publishing overseeing editorial strategy, marketing, partnerships and business development.

DIRECTORS

OUR BOARD



PRESIDENT

Justin Koonin

BSc (Hons), PhD, CFA, FAICD

Justin has worked within LGBTQ community organisations for 15 years. Internationally, he is co-chair of the UHC2030 Steering Committee, the international multistakeholder partnership for universal health coverage, and is a member of multiple WHO expert panels. Justin is Honorary Professorial Fellow at The George Institute for Global Health, and Adjunct Associate Professor in the Faculty of Medicine and Health at the University of New South Wales. He is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, and a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors Not-for-Profit Chairs Advisory Forum. Justin is trained as a mathematician, and currently works as an investment analyst. He has also worked as a postdoctoral research associate in mathematics (at the University of Sydney), and as a consultant in the areas of predictive analytics and data.



VICE PRESIDENT

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.



Atari Metcalf

MD, BSc

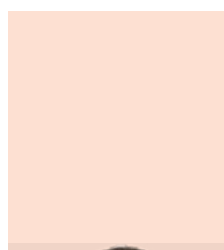
Atari is an openly trans GP registrar with an interest in sexual and reproductive health alongside regular work in Emergency Medicine. He completed his internship and residency at St Vincent's Hospital working across a variety of medical and surgical specialties in addition to completing secondments in paediatrics and Aboriginal health. Prior to practising medicine Atari spent 15 years working in health promotion research, policy and strategy within community and digital mental and sexual health services, as well as working 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 also served as a Board Director at Suicide Prevention Australia and as co-chair of Twenty10 incorporating NSW Gay and Lesbian Counselling Services.

Benjamin Bavinton

BA (Hons), MPH, PhD



Benjamin has worked in the field of HIV prevention and research for over 15 years in Australia and internationally. He is a Senior Research Fellow at the Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney, and leads the Biobehavioural HIV Prevention Research Group. His research focuses on the biomedical, behavioural and epidemiological aspects of HIV prevention among gay and bisexual men in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. He worked at ACON in gay men's peer education from 2004 to 2010.



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.

Christian Dunk

BA (IR) Hons



Jason Glanville

Jason is a Wiradjuri start-up founder with extensive governance expertise and experience across community, corporate, government and philanthropy. He works as an adviser on strategy, leadership, governance and systems transformation working with leaders across the commercial, for-purpose, and creative sectors to create platforms for sustainable change. Jason is a Co-founder and Director of Native Foodways, was the inaugural Executive Director of the Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity program and creator and inaugural CEO of the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence. He was part of the start-up team that built Reconciliation Australia and served on its Board for five years. He is currently a member of the Boards of the GO Foundation and The Foundation for Young Australians, and, until recently, was Chair of PwC Indigenous Consulting and the Indigenous Governance Institute.



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 Convener 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).



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.

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.



Julie Mooney-Somers

BSc, GradCertEdStud, PhD



Zoé de Saram PSM

BAgrEc, MAICD

Zoé 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. In February 2021, Zoé was appointed to the role of Director, Performance Audit, at the Audit Office of NSW. Prior to that she was Executive Advisor, Public Sector Practice at the North Point Consulting Group, a boutique firm specialising in designing and executing strategy, digitally enabled business models and business transformation. She is a member of LILY, a pay it forward mentoring program for a diverse group of women, and is actively involved in raising awareness about breast cancer and supporting women recovering from breast cancer.



FINANCIAL REPORT

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2022

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 86 to 89 which is not part of these financial statements.

The financial statements were authorised for issue by the directors on 14 September 2022. The directors have the power to amend and reissue the financial statement



ACON at the Sydney Mardi Gras Parade 2021.
Photo: Steve Christo

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 2022.

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
 - Justin Koonin
 - Louisa Degenhardt
 - Atari Metcalf
- Benjamin Bavinton
 - Christian Dunk
 - Jason Glanville
 - (Appointed on 16 February 2022)
- Julie Mooney-Somers
 - Somali Cerise
 - Steven Berveling
 - Zo   de Saram

Notes:
Jason Glanville was appointed to the Board on 16 February 2022. Jason did not attend that meeting.

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:

ACON Health Board meetings - Attendance From 1 July 2021 - 30 June 2022		
Board member	Meetings Held	Meetings Attended
Justin Koonin	6	6
Louisa Degenhardt	6	5
Atari Metcalf	6	2
Benjamin Bavinton	6	6
Christian Dunk	6	4
Jason Glanville	2	1
Julie Mooney-Somers	6	5
Somali Cerise	6	5
Steven Berveling	6	6
Zo�� de Saram	6	6

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES

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 psychosocial 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 focussing on post diagnosis support, living well with HIV and planning for healthy ageing.

Promoting the health throughout life of LGBTI 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 LGBTQ community and to reduce the impacts of negative health determinants including: Alcohol and Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Smoking, Homophobic and Transphobic Violence, Healthy Ageing and Aged Care, Domestic and 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 LGBTQ employees within Australian workplaces targeted initiatives via education and benchmarking and through the Pride in Diversity Program.
- Establishing Partnerships with government, other NGO's, health care providers, researchers and affected communities
- Ensuring all direct LGBTQ 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 LGBTI 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 2022 resulted in a reportable deficit of \$159,626 (30 June 2021: reportable deficit of \$(109,763)). The adjusted net surplus after accounting for AASB 16 Leases adopted in 2021 is as follows:

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Net surplus under old accounting standard AASB 117 Leases	441,604	623,573
Impact of new accounting standard AASB 16 Leases	(446,000)	(876,737)
Net Surplus/Deficit	(4,396)	(253,164)
Gain/(Loss) in fair value of investment	(155,230)	143,401
Reportable deficit	(159,626)	(109,763)

The 2021/2022 financial year continued to be a challenging year for ACON with the COVID-19 pandemic impacting our main activities and service delivery. ACON continued to be flexible and innovative in its provision of services to continue to meet the needs of our communities. Despite the financial impact on fundraising and events, our membership programs continued to bring in additional revenue.

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

No matters or circumstance has arisen since 30 June 2021 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 14th day of September 2022



Justin Koonin
President



Louisa Degenhardt
Vice President

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2022

	Notes	2022 \$	2021 \$
Income			
Grants:			
NSW Department of Health		12,940,360	12,639,286
Local Health Districts		721,953	584,291
Other grants		2,394,989	3,682,200
Fundraising	17(a)	892,321	461,167
Interest received/receivable		63,430	89,409
Membership		3,089	2,761
Fee for service		3,876,869	3,235,712
Rent received		363,949	336,493
Sale of vitamins		5,313	5,921
Sale of materials		148,054	156,711
Other Income		334,311	280,393
Total revenue from operations		21,744,638	21,474,344
Expenditure			
Salaries & associated costs		13,767,998	13,044,224
Campaigns & Education		1,762,404	1,626,162
Outgoings and property costs		238,141	591,510
Depreciation – plant & equipment		246,684	319,468
Depreciation – lease		2,120,261	2,313,639
Finance expense – lease		688,566	518,151
Building maintenance		315,336	351,750
Communications		147,595	175,178
Travel and representation		180,709	177,097
Donations given		105,564	179,186
Events and activities		508,810	469,280
Administrative costs		1,587,387	1,914,580
Cost of goods sold		79,579	47,282
Total expenditure		21,749,034	21,727,507
Net Surplus (Deficit) for the year before tax		(4,396)	(253,164)
Gain/(Loss) in fair value of investment		(155,230)	143,401
Other comprehensive income for the year		(155,230)	143,401
Total Comprehensive Income/(Loss) of ACON Health Ltd		(159,626)	(109,763)

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

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2022

	Notes	2022 \$	2021 \$
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	4	12,982,862	9,509,823
Receivables	5	499,692	1,213,517
Contract asset		64,185	37,742
Inventories		2,880	2,352
Prepayments		336,612	162,825
Total Current Assets		13,886,231	10,926,259
Non-Current Assets			
Other Financial Assets	6	4,027,484	1,529,216
Plant & equipment and lease incentive	7	740,243	688,087
Right-of-use asset	8	15,983,563	18,103,824
Total Non-Current Assets		20,751,290	20,321,127
Total Assets		34,637,521	31,247,386
Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	9	1,161,259	1,061,423
Grants and revenue in advance	10	9,100,949	4,419,184
Lease Liability	12	1,632,857	1,597,345
Employee entitlements	11	2,580,063	2,227,169
Total Current Liabilities		14,475,128	9,305,121
Non-current Liabilities			
Lease Liability	12	15,680,894	17,301,141
Total Non-current Liabilities		15,680,894	17,301,141
Total Liabilities		30,156,022	26,606,261
Net Assets		4,481,499	4,641,125
Accumulated Funds			
Retained surplus at the end of the year	18	2,014,451	2,733,266
Funds Reserve		2,530,804	1,816,385
Revaluation Reserve		(63,756)	91,474
Total Accumulated Funds		4,481,498	4,641,125

The 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 2022

	Retained Surplus	Revaluation Reserve	Funds Reserve	Total
Year ended 30 June 2022				
Total stakeholder funds at the beginning of the financial year	2,733,266	91,474	1,816,385	4,641,125
Transfer to funds reserve	(714,419)	-	714,419	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	(4,396)	(155,230)	-	(159,626)
Total stakeholder funds at the end of the financial year	2,014,451	(63,756)	2,530,804	4,481,499
Year ended 30 June 2021				
Total stakeholder funds at the beginning of the financial year	3,317,543	(51,927)	1,485,272	4,750,888
Transfer to funds reserve	(331,113)	-	331,113	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	(253,164)	143,401	-	(109,763)
Total stakeholder funds at the end of the financial year	2,733,266	91,474	1,816,385	4,641,125

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 2022

	Notes	2022 \$	2021 \$
Cash flows from operating activities			
Receipts from customers, granting bodies & fundraising (inclusive of goods & services tax)		29,244,920	23,509,183
Payments to suppliers and employees (inclusive of goods & services tax)		(20,399,227)	(19,652,014)
Interest received		63,430	61,363
Net cash inflow from operating activities		8,909,123	3,918,532
Cash flows from investing activities			
Payments for property, plant & equipment		(298,839)	(196,283)
Payment for investment		(2,625,803)	-
Net cash outflow from investing activities		(2,924,642)	(196,283)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Principal repayments for leases		(2,511,442)	(1,954,643)
Net cash outflow from financing activities		(2,511,442)	(1,954,643)
Net increase in cash held		3,473,039	1,767,606
Cash at the beginning of the year		9,509,823	7,742,217
Cash at the end of the year	4	12,982,862	9,509,823

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 – Simplified Disclosures 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 – Simplified Disclosures as issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB).

ii) New and amended standards adopted by the group

Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting (Conceptual Framework)

The consolidated entity has adopted the revised Conceptual Framework from 1 January 2020. The Conceptual Framework contains new definition and recognition criteria as well as new guidance on measurement that affects several Accounting Standards, but it has not had a material impact on the consolidated entity's financial statements.

AASB 1060 General Purpose Financial Statements - Simplified Disclosures for For-Profit and Not-for-Profit Tier 2 Entities

The consolidated entity has adopted AASB 1060 from 1 January 2020. The standard provides a new Tier 2 reporting framework with simplified disclosures that are based on the requirements of IFRS for SMEs. As a result, there is increased disclosure in these financial statements for key management personnel, related parties, tax and financial instruments.

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 2022 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.

Intercompany 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

The Group recognises revenue as follows:

Revenue from contracts with customers

Revenue is recognised at an amount that reflects the consideration to which the company is expected to be entitled in exchange for transferring goods or services to a customer. For each contract with a customer, the company: identifies the contract with a customer; identifies the performance obligations in the contract; determines the transaction price which takes into account estimates of variable consideration and the time value of money; allocates the transaction price to the separate performance obligations on the basis of the relative stand-alone selling price of each distinct good or service to be delivered; and recognises revenue when or as each performance obligation is satisfied in a manner that depicts the transfer to the customer of the goods or services promised.

Variable consideration within the transaction price, if any, reflects concessions provided to the customer such as discounts, rebates and refunds, any potential bonuses receivable from the customer and any other contingent events. Such estimates are determined using either the 'expected value' or 'most likely amount' method. The measurement of variable consideration is subject to a constraining principle whereby revenue will only be recognised to the extent that it is highly probable that a significant reversal in the amount of cumulative revenue recognised will not occur. The measurement constraint continues until the uncertainty associated with the variable consideration is subsequently resolved. Amounts received that are subject to the constraining principle are recognised as a refund liability.

(i) Sales revenue

Events, fundraising and raffles recognised when received or receivable.

(ii) Donations

Donations recognised at the time the pledge is made.

(iii) Grants

Grant revenue is recognised in profit or loss when the company satisfies the performance obligations stated within the funding agreements.

If conditions are attached to the grant which must be satisfied before the company is eligible to retain the contribution, the grant will be recognised in the statement of financial position as a liability until those conditions are satisfied.

(iv) Interest

Interest revenue is recognised as interest accrues using the effective interest method. This is a method of calculating the amortised cost of a financial asset and allocating the interest income over the relevant period using the effective interest rate, which is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash receipts through the expected life of the financial asset to the net carrying amount of the financial asset.

(v) Other revenue

Other revenue is recognised when it is received or when the right to receive payment is established.

(vi) Voluntary services

The Group has elected to not recognise volunteer services as either revenue or other form of contribution received. As such, any related consumption or capitalisation of such resources received is also not recognised.

D. CONTRACT ASSETS AND CONTRACT LIABILITIES

(i) Contract assets

Contract assets are recognised when the company has transferred goods or services to the customer but where the company is yet to establish an unconditional right to consideration. Contract assets are treated as financial assets for impairment purposes.

(ii) Contract liabilities

Contract liabilities are recognised when the company's obligation to transfer goods or services to a customer for which the company has received consideration (or an amount of consideration is due) from the customer, however the obligations related to the consideration have not yet been fulfilled.

E. 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.

F. 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.

G. 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.

H. 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.

I. 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.

J. 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.

K. 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	10 years

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.

L. 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.

M. 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.

N. 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.

O. 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

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Cash on hand	3,425	3,425
Cash at bank		
Cheque account – operations	12,979,437	9,506,398
	12,982,862	9,509,823

5. Current assets – receivables

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Trade receivables	524,542	1,249,517
Provision for doubtful debts	(24,850)	(36,000)
	499,692	1,213,517

The amount of the provision for doubtful debts was \$24,850 (30 June 2021: \$36,000). All of the group's trade and other receivables have been reviewed for indicators of impairment. Certain trade receivables were found to be written off \$11,150 (30 June 2021: impaired and an allowance for credit losses \$16,000) has been recorded accordingly within other expenses.

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

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Reconciliation of allowance credit losses		
Balance 1 July	36,000	20,000
Amounts written off (uncollectable)	(11,150)	-
Impairment loss	-	16,000
Balance 30 June	-	-
	24,850	36,000

6. Non-current assets - other financial assets

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Non-current investments		
Investment portfolio	3,995,130	1,496,862
Term deposit	32,354	32,354
	4,027,484	1,529,216

The investment portfolio represents a managed fund and has been valued based on their quoted unit price.

7. 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 improve-ments \$	Totals \$
At 30 June 2021					
Cost or fair value	1,023,604	2,097,300	146,650	1,603,916	4,871,470
Accumulated depreciation	(936,120)	(1,840,923)	-	(1,406,339)	(4,183,382)
Net book value	87,484	256,377	146,650	197,577	688,088
Year ended 30 June 2022					
Opening net book value	87,484	256,377	146,650	197,577	688,088
Additions/(Disposals)	(532)	114,556	-	184,815	298,839
Depreciation charge	(29,285)	(146,208)	-	(71,191)	(246,684)
Closing net book value	57,667	224,725	146,650	311,201	740,243
At 30 June 2022					
Cost or fair value	1,023,072	2,211,856	146,650	1,788,732	5,170,310
Accumulated depreciation	(965,405)	(1,987,131)	-	(1,477,531)	(4,430,067)
Net book value	57,667	224,725	146,650	311,201	740,243

8. Right of use asset

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Non-current assets		
Right-of-use assets	22,026,650	22,026,650
Less: Accumulated depreciation	(6,043,087)	(3,922,826)
Total	15,983,563	18,103,824

9. Current liabilities - trade and other payables

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Goods & Services Tax net payable	814,212	392,712
Trade creditors	160,100	209,292
Accrued expenses	186,947	459,419
Total	1,161,259	1,061,423

10. Current liabilities - grants and revenue in advance

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Grants in advance	7,181,052	2,953,001
Deferred revenue	1,919,897	1,466,183
Total	9,100,949	4,419,184

11. Current liabilities - employee entitlements

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Employee entitlements - annual and long service leave	2,580,063	2,227,169
Number of employees at reporting date (full time equivalent)	124	125

12. Lease liability

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Current liabilities		
Lease Liability	1,632,857	1,597,345
Non-current liabilities		
Lease Liability	15,680,894	17,301,141
Total	17,313,751	18,898,486

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Future lease payments due as follows:		
Right-of-use assets	2,161,412	2,272,027
Right-of-use assets	11,336,638	11,072,975
Less: Accumulated depreciation	6,624,268	9,049,342
Total	20,122,317	22,394,344

13. Auditor remuneration

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Audit services- Grant Thornton	38,850	37,000

14. 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.

15. Related party transactions

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

16. 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 2022/2023 financial year.

17. 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 2022 to 3 May 2027.

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

	2022 Total	2021 Total
Gross income received from fundraising	892,321	461,167
Cost of fundraising	304,137	267,647
Net proceeds from fundraising	588,184	193,520
Application of net proceeds	588,184	193,520
Net surplus from fundraising	-	-

	Red Ribbon \$	Vivid \$	General \$
Gross income received from fundraising	43,778	401,487	447,057
Cost of fundraising	7,431	144,448	152,258
Net proceeds from fundraising	36,347	257,039	294,799
Application of net proceeds	36,347	257,039	294,799
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

	2022 Total	2021 Total
Cash at bank	-	-
Total assets	-	-
Other payables	-	-
Total liabilities	-	-
Net assets	-	-

18. Retained surplus

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Retained surplus at the beginning of the year	2,733,266	3,317,543
Transfer to funds reserve	(714,419)	(331,113)
Current year surplus	(4,396)	(253,164)
Retained surplus at the end of the year	2,014,451	2,733,266

19. 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	2022 \$	2021 \$
Current assets	13,886,231	10,926,260
Total assets	34,637,521	31,247,387
Current liabilities	(14,475,128)	(9,305,121)
Total liabilities	(30,156,022)	(26,606,262)
Stakeholders' Funds		
Total Accumulated Funds	4,481,499	4,641,125
Other comprehensive income	(155,230)	143,401
Operating surplus/(deficit) for the year	(159,626)	(109,763)

b) Contingent liabilities of the parent entity

The parent entity did not have any contingent liabilities as at 30 June 2022 (30 June 2021 \$nil).

20. Matters subsequent to the end of the financial year

No matters or circumstance has arisen since 30 June 2022 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 8 to 24 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 2022 and of its performance for the financial year ended on that date; and
 - b) comply with Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosures (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



Louisa Degenhardt
Vice President

Dated at Sydney this 14th day of September 2022.



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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 2022, 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 Audit Pty Ltd
Chartered Accountants

L J Te-Wierik
Partner – Audit & Assurance

Sydney, 14 September 2022

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Independent Auditor's Report

To the Members of ACON Health Limited

Report on the audit of the financial report

Opinion

We have audited the 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 2022, 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 the requirements of Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 ("ACNC Act"), including:

- giving a true and fair view of the Registered Entity's financial position as at 30 June 2022 and of its financial performance for the year then ended; and
- complying with Australian Accounting Standards AASB 1060 *General Purpose Financial Statements -Simplified Disclosures for For-Profit and Not-for-Profit Tier 2 Entities* 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 (Including Independence Standards)* (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 opinion.

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

Those charged with governance are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Directors' Report for the year ended 30 June 2022, and the Declaration in accordance with the Charitable Fundraising Regulation 2021 (NSW), but does not include the financial report and our auditor's report thereon.

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 and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards AASB 1060 *General Purpose Financial Statements - Simplified Disclosures for For-Profit and Not-for-Profit Tier 2 Entities*, the ACNC Act, the Charitable Fundraising Act 1991 (NSW), the Charitable Fundraising Regulation 2021 (NSW), and for 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.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial report is located at the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board website at: https://www.auasb.gov.au/auditors_responsibilities/ar4.pdf. This description forms part of our auditor's report.



Grant Thornton Audit Pty Ltd
Chartered Accountants



L J Te-Wierik
Partner – Audit & Assurance

Sydney, 14 September 2022



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Photo: Steve Christo

OUR VISION

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



